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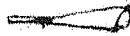
PLATONIC LOVE

AND

THE
ONE
UNFORGIVABLE
SIN

A dissertation
submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Philosophy

Stephen Foster Sharp



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2002

To Catherine Scott

Supposing truth to be a woman ...

Nietzsche

I cannot come to terms with the fact that my mother will die, I cannot agree with this. I will protest and show that my mother is immortal. I want to convince others of her striking individuality, of her uniqueness. The internal premise is to analyse her character with the claim that she is immortal. I want to pose the question 'why is she immortal?'

Tarkovsky

The aim of art is to prepare a person for death

Tarkovsky

CONTENTS

ABSTRACTi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTSii

PREFACEiv

PART I LOVE.....1

EUTHYPHRO

PIETY and INVENTING THE DIVINE.....2

PROTAGORAS (NOTE)

UNDERSTANDING UNDERSTANDING and THE SEARCH FOR BEAUTY..... 10

APOLOGY

BEAUTY AS THE LANGUAGE OF THE DIVINE and IMPIETY AS DIRECT COMMUNICATION..... 13

REPUBLIC

SUMMONERS and THE CRAFT OF COMMUNICATION.....22

PHAEDO

FABLES and ARGUMENTS37

PHAEDRUS

TRUTH AS BEAUTY and BACKLOVE AS RECIPROCITY46

PART II SIN..... 56

INTRODUCTION

SUPPOSING METHOD MATTERS..... 59

KRAUT

SUPPOSING PLATO TO BE ARTLESS..... 62

RYLE

SUPPOSING PLATO TO BE CONFUSED..... 68

CHILDCARE ACTION PROJECT (NOTE)

SUPPOSING ART IS ANALYZABLE..... 74

DAWKINS (NOTE)

SUPPOSING PEOPLE TO BE MECHANISMS..... 76

DREYFUS (NOTE)

SUPPOSING PLATO TO HAVE HAD ANALYTIC AMBITIONS 78

KUHN

SUPPOSING SCIENCE INVESTIGATES A WORLD..... 80

KANT

SUPPOSING ALL EDUCATION IS IMITATIVE 88

WORKS CITED..... 96

ABSTRACT

Nietzsche contradicts himself. He revels in that manner; so, we clearly invite ridicule upon ourselves if we earnestly pull him up on his manifest inconsistencies. In cornering us in this way Nietzsche gives us something only we can do. Suppose Plato revels in the same kind of appearance of ridiculousness (compare the conclusion to his *Republic* image of the cave 7.517a; also *Symposium* 221e). Now forgo the comfort of pulling him up on that appearance.

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I

In large part, this thesis owes its existence to Philip Catton. He along with Bob Stoothoff first showed me what it is to be a philosopher. As well as playing an inspirational role, Philip also played the multiple roles of sounding board, editor, councillor, mountain guide, philosophical mid-wife and wet-nurse. Philip and Bob are responsible for converting me from being an anti-philosopher to the only slightly more philosophically respectable position of anti-theorist.

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VI

The above issue now clocks in as a four-year unresolved dispute. For that I would like to thank the Vice Chancellor Daryl Le Grew, the Registrar Alan Hayward, the Chancellor Phyllias Guthardt, and the then Deputy Vice Chancellor John Burrows.

PREFACE

I

This work is in two parts: *Part I* briefly surveys a number of dialogues. In those chapters, I attempt to illustrate an approach to understanding Plato that portrays him as an indirect rather than a direct communicator. I argue that Plato cannot directly state what he genuinely communicates. According to this reading, in order to get a handle on Plato, we must recognise a necessary connection between the form and the content of his work. As soon as we understand why Plato communicated in the way that he did, we at once also understand what Plato sought to communicate.

We reach such an understanding only upon gathering the form of his dialogues and instantiating that meaning as constitutive of our own understanding. According to this method, Plato is able to prevent us rightly saying things along the lines: *while Plato believes that x, I do not believe that x*. Plato's peculiar way of communicating demands something from us. Because of this, it turns out that the sufficient conditions for us believing that *x* have been met in our discovery that Plato believes that *x*. Plato does not allow us to read him as a spokesman for a position, which we can in turn reject. For he has us implicate our own understandings as intrinsic authorities in those beliefs we find ourselves justified in attributing to him.

Part II very briefly discusses some other thinkers. In a somewhat oblique way these discussions seek to explain why some readers will see little promise or no promise in that approach to Plato outlined in *Part I*. In short, I blame those readers. I conclude that the cause for their frustration is not a theoretical issue but rather a practical one. Consequently — because, in this work, I do not adopt Plato's form of communication — there is nothing I can do to address their disappointment; those disappointed readers must do something themselves in order to check their frustration. (It turns out that I am not really justified in blaming those disappointed readers; for, there is something that I have failed to do regarding the form of this work. Only Plato can unproblematically blame his readers — though, because of the form of his work, such a direct attribution of blame by him must remain unstated.)

II

Combined, *Part I* and *Part II* do not form a whole; neither does each part on its own constitute a whole. Consequently, from a certain perspective, both parts look quite inadequate. Consider *Part I*: (1) it deals with only a small number of dialogues, and its discussions sweep across those dialogues too rapidly to survey much of their detail. (2) None of the discussions (explicitly) engages with any of the vast amount of scholarship on those works. (3) Even though *Part I* chooses to discuss only the primary texts, it concerns itself with English translations of those works and not with the kind of scholarly regard for them that must be based on knowledge of the Greek language.

There is a perspective from which none of those apparent deficiencies is a genuine cause for worry. The reader (if he or she is to recognise any worth in *Part I*) must discover that perspective.

II.1

Over against the concern that its discussion of the dialogues is incomplete, *Part I* simply does not aim to present an introduction to either Plato's works or any one of those works. *Part I* merely attempts to show a way of approaching Plato; it does not seek at any level to exhaust that way. This constraint, or manifest incompleteness, ought to allow the reader to see some promise to that approach.

II.2

Over against the concern about my lack of engagement with extant scholarship (that is, even though the detail of *Part I*'s discussions, along with its conclusions, will, in places, coincide with and, in other places, detract from what numerous scholars variously say about those dialogues, *Part I* does not critically engage with those other voices nor does it rehearse those points of contact and dispute), *Part I* aims merely to show a method. An additional discussion centring on how the results of that method match or fail to match the results poured out from

other methods would be (from the perspective of that method) uninteresting and misplaced. Such an engagement would immediately detract from *Part I*'s showing.

The inclusion of a discussion in *Part I* of the more interesting issue of what those disagreements mark, namely, far more basic methodological disagreements, would also be misplaced. The presence of such a discussion would imply that something can be done (i.e., shown), which *Part I* concludes cannot be done (i.e., shown). One conclusion from *Part I* is that, if one's communication is direct, then communication is possible only if there is prior methodological agreement.

Part I argues that Plato is well aware of this problem of incommensurability and he presents a solution. He creates a necessary connection between the form of his communication and what he seeks to communicate. With this manifest necessity, Plato is able practically to resolve the threat of methodological disputes. But, that practical solution relies not merely on Plato doing something quite particular it also relies on his readers doing something quite particular. Thus, there is no stateable solution only a doable one. Consequently, it is only a solution for those who find it. Plato's solution is also Plato's Socrates' solution. And within the dialogues, Plato shows that his solution is not quick-fire. For he shows Socrates, after a lifetime of attempting to communicate in this way, dying misunderstood as much by his friends as by his foes. (After the spirit of *Part I*, *Part II* questions the possibility of a theoretical resolution for disputes over method. *Part II* concludes that such disputes arise from something deeper or more primary than theory.)

II.3

Over against the concerns that are raised by my attention just to English translations of Plato's works, the reader should assume that a philological engagement with the texts at the level of Greek language lexical disputes regarding historically received meanings of various terms, would immediately detract from, and most likely positively frustrate, the progress of that approach shown in *Part I*. Such a focus on the given elements of the text, promises only to upset the downward determination of meaning worked by the method shown in *Part I*. That is to say, a preoccupation with the problems of translation, together with an insistence that scholars engage with the original language of the text, is to take on board an analytic method unsuited to the form of the dialogues.

On this issue, *Part I* shows how Plato introduces his readers to a method that creates rather than receives meaning; following this method, something internal rather than external verifies meaning (that is to say, for Plato form rather than primarily content determines meaning). Of course, this is not to deny that adequate translations of the dialogues are necessary before non-Greek speakers can gather their meaning; rather, it is merely to assert that the accuracy of translations is not as important as some approaches will insist. The approach presented in *Part I* suggests that the more preoccupied we become with problems in translation the more we will distance ourselves from the method towards which Plato invites us. For the more we become concerned with the historically received meaning of particular terms the more we will be drawn to assume that meaning is upwardly determined from the base elements of the text. On the other hand, if we (along with *Part I*) assume that meaning is downwardly determined, then a translation does not need to be as accurate as it would have to be to support an understanding that assumes the opposite method. This is all just to suggest that the question concerning the importance of translations is a methodological rather than a theoretical issue; to assume otherwise is to beg the question against the method presented in *Part I*.

III

Part II broadly discusses the problem of method; it concludes that it is an aesthetic-practical, rather than a theoretical, issue.

PART I

LOVE

EUTHYPHRO
PIETY AND INVENTING THE DIVINE

ABSTRACT..... 2

1.1 COMMUNICATING UNDERSTANDING AND UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION..... 3

1.2 FORM OF COMMUNICATION AND FORM OF UNDERSTANDING..... 4

1.3 EUTHYPHRO'S RECEPTIVITY AND THE CHASE OF AUTHORITY 4

1.4 SLAVES AND VALUE..... 6

1.5 EXTRINSIC VALUE AND DEICIDE 7

1.6 INVENTING THE DIVINE AND THE FORM OF PIETY..... 7

1.7 VALUERS AND VALUE..... 8

NOTES..... 8

ABSTRACT

Thematically, *Euthyphro* and *Apology* make a tight pair. In the former, Euthyphro, whose understanding is merely receptive, cannot gather the necessary nature of the divine. In the latter dialogue, Meletus accuses Socrates of making or inventing gods and forsaking 'the gods in whom the city believes'. Direct communicators, such as Euthyphro and Meletus, confuse inventions with lies. In turn, they suppose that only an appropriate type of receipt can guarantee truth. Socrates shows that direct communicators bear false witness to truth. Their passive method of receipt is antithetical to the active and necessary nature of the divine. Thus, Socrates agrees with the supporting claims of Meletus' indictment. However, he denies what Meletus concludes. Socrates essentially concludes that because they refuse to invent the divine Euthyphro and Meletus cannot avoid impiety.

1.1 COMMUNICATING UNDERSTANDING AND UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION

Euthyphro appears to be a work centring solely on the nature of piety. For this reason, the relevance of the dialogue's discussion and resolution might seem limited. However, such a conclusion would be a mistake. For in that work, Socrates essentially charges: if you cannot make (coherent) sense of the nature of piety then you are bound not to make appropriate sense of anything else, for you will be unable to recognise what is true.

Throughout the dialogue, Socrates and Euthyphro wage a battle over the nature of piety. Clearly, Socrates wins. However, what that may mean for our understanding of piety may be less clear. For the dialogue appears to end somewhere close to where it begins. At its close, Socrates says: '[s]o we must investigate again from the beginning what piety is' (15c). Euthyphro entered into that foregoing discussion all too willing to expound his understanding; however, when Socrates invites him to revisit that ground he quickly excuses himself (15e).

In that earlier discussion, Socrates embarrasses Euthyphro's understanding. However, it may appear that Socrates offers no alternative in its place. If this is how things appear, then we show ourselves beholden to something of Euthyphro's way of looking at things. That is to say, we implicitly suppose that Socrates will communicate his understanding in a certain way; we read Plato in the same way Euthyphro reads Homer.

Such a misreading of the discussion leaves us with Euthyphro's dilemma: '[i]s the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?' (10a). Resolving this requires us to transform our understanding of the way in which Socrates communicates. As Euthyphro prepares to leave (forgoing Socrates' invitation to continue their discussion), Socrates offers him a clue concerning the nature of that transformation. Socrates says:

[w]hat a thing to do, my friend! By going you have cast me down from a great hope I had, that I would learn from you the nature of the pious and the impious and so escape Meletus' indictment by showing him that I had acquired wisdom in divine matters from Euthyphro, and my ignorance would no longer cause me to be careless and inventive about such things ... (15e-16a)

Here, Socrates identifies both the ground of Euthyphro's muddle and what he must do in order to free himself from it. In the foregoing discussion, Euthyphro attempts to teach Socrates. Consequently, he goes astray even before he begins; for he assumes that he can directly transfer an understanding to Socrates. With that presumption, Euthyphro misconceives both what it is to understand and what it is to communicate.

If an understanding is not the kind of thing that one person can give to another, then there is but one alternative: people must author or invent an understanding for themselves. Thus, according to Socrates, an understanding must come from within, rather than from without. That is to say, it must arise from its own motion rather than from an impinging motion

from without. This distinction between Euthyphro's merely receptive understanding and Socrates' inventive understanding (an understanding that seeks to know itself) is the key to understand aright Socrates' positive view of piety.

Throughout the dialogue, Socrates chases the contents of Euthyphro's receptive understanding through Euthyphro (as a reader of the epics), straight through the apparent authors of the epics, to the nature of the divine, where he is able finally to corner its flight. A dilemma results. Euthyphro can only genuinely escape that bind by changing the way he understands. That is to say, he can only escape by becoming more godlike himself. By the dialogue's end, however, Euthyphro, wrongly but consistently conceives that the problem with which Socrates confronts him is external to him. So rather than pulling himself together (cf. 12a) he merely seeks to escape the presence of Socrates. With that flight (and its associated externalisation of blame – see *Protagoras* chapter), Euthyphro (passively) maintains his distance from the nature of the divine. Here, Euthyphro presages the events of the *Apology*: there Socrates' accusers and the jury think they can escape a similar kind of bind by eliminating Socrates.

1.2 FORM OF COMMUNICATION AND FORM OF UNDERSTANDING

The dialogue opens as Euthyphro and Socrates run into each other as each heads to court. In some sense, both of their cases concern the nature of piety. In one, Meletus indicts Socrates on the charge of impiety; in the other, because he thinks it is the pious thing to do, Euthyphro prosecutes his father for murder. From this perspective however, even though both of their cases concern piety, Euthyphro's and Socrates' situations appear quite opposite.

Nevertheless, Euthyphro sees a similarity. For even though no one actually prosecutes him, Euthyphro nevertheless considers himself persecuted. He confesses, '[w]henever I speak of divine matters in the assembly ... they laugh me down as if I were crazy' (3bc). Furthermore, regarding his initiative to prosecute his father, his relatives rebuke him and suggest that his actions are impious (4e). Euthyphro thinks that his fellow Athenians persecute him in this way for precisely the same reason Meletus indicts Socrates. For according to Euthyphro, people are, for the most part, not only ignorant of divine matters but also jealous of those who have superior wisdom (4e-5a). Socrates playfully runs with at least half of Euthyphro's analysis, and suggests that Euthyphro teach him about godliness and ungodliness.

Euthyphro begins by telling Socrates that the best way to respond to the assaults of his advisories is to 'meet them head-on' (3c). He is thus a direct communicator; and with that method, he seeks to 'make ... others to be like himself' (3c). Direct communicators, such as Euthyphro, assume that their method transfers value. However, with such a passive take on what it is to communicate, to understand and to value Euthyphro cannot appreciate the essentially active nature of the divine. He thus unwittingly associates piety with ungodliness (i.e., passivity) rather than godliness (i.e., activity). Consequently, he fails to appreciate what Socrates communicates.

1.3 EUTHYPHRO'S RECEPTIVITY AND THE CHASE OF AUTHORITY

Euthyphro claims to know more about divine matters than the majority of people (4e-5a). However, it quickly becomes apparent that his wisdom is quite mundane. The ordinariness or godlessness of Euthyphro's supposed knowledge follows from the way he acquires it. When Socrates asks him to show his understanding (5d), Euthyphro begins to rehearse his memory of the poets. Socrates quickly stops him and states that he did not ask for a list, but for an understanding (6cd). Because Euthyphro uses his understanding in a merely receptive way, it contains only what is alien to it. Consequently, even though Euthyphro in some sense possesses many things, he does not rightly possess an understanding. He thus does not understand Socrates' demand.

Because of the way in which Euthyphro uses his understanding, he does not claim to be the source of what he knows — he receives that supposed knowledge from the poets. However, in this respect, the poets are no different from him; for they, like Euthyphro, supposedly merely convey or pass on what they receive. The epic poets write what is multitudinous (see 6c, 7b+), and for this reason nothing intrinsic to their production marks it as

veridical. Thus, if the poets claim to speak the truth we must look beyond them to find the source of what they say. In order to secure their authority, what they say must originally emanate from a different type of source: a source that is intrinsically, rather than merely extrinsically, authoritative. The chain must therefore terminate in something godlike.

However, causally anchoring the authority of the poets in the gods will do nothing to shore up Euthyphro's understanding. For even assuming that the gods could be direct communicators (which turns out to be a contradiction) they cannot after that method pass on an understanding. For no matter how accurately the poets relate what the gods say, that bare description, of itself, is of no use. Euthyphro thinks it is however; he wrongly assumes that it is a trivial matter to introduce an 'ought' into that account.

Socrates points out that, according to the poets, there is 'war among the gods, and terrible enmity and battles' (6b, also see 7b+). Euthyphro agrees. This conflict therefore forces Euthyphro to introduce the 'ought' into a particular place in the account and he must decide where. He inserts the 'ought' before the description of what Zeus does. Zeus, Euthyphro rehearses, 'bound his father because he ... swallowed his sons, and ... he in turn castrated his father' (6a).

However, it is not clear why Euthyphro places the injunction there rather than in front of the description of what Zeus' father does. Necessity must attach to the 'ought.' Euthyphro cannot accomplish this transformation merely by introducing an 'ought' before (or outside) a particular understanding (or, before what a particular actor does). He must rather go into that understanding to discover an 'ought' (or an inner necessity). That is to say, he will only find the 'ought' in what constitutes an understanding.

Socrates offers to look away from the many supposed disagreements amongst the gods (9c). And Euthyphro seizes upon that option: following Socrates' lead, he attaches the 'ought' to that on which all the gods concur (9d). However, this will not do either. With this move, Euthyphro is still no closer to gaining an understanding of piety. Just as he cannot rightly locate authority in what is multitudinous and at enmity, neither can he establish authority upon concurrence across what is multitudinous; for such concurrence is still extrinsic. That is to say, Euthyphro still deals with what lies essentially outside of, or between, understandings, not with what constitutes an understanding. There can be no necessity or completion in mere concurrence.

Here we see the intimate connection between on the one hand the method by which Euthyphro comes to "know" (what he claims to know) and on the other hand the nature of what he claims to know. The method by which he comes to his supposed knowledge determines the character of what he claims to know. Thus, because he uses his understanding in a merely receptive way, he can never come to an understanding himself. What is multiple does not confront him merely because Homer refers to many gods rather than to a single god; he would face the very same problem if Homer only wrote about a single god who always acted consistently. It is not because of what Homer writes that Euthyphro cannot get beyond multiplicity and extrinsic authority. Rather, Euthyphro is in this state because of the way in which he reads Homer.

Even if Homer had written of but a single god, and had quoted that single god concerning the nature of piety (i.e., telling us that the god says that x is what is pious), Euthyphro's receptive understanding still faces the same problem. For, Homer does not thereby directly transfer to him an understanding of what is pious, he merely transfers what promises to be regulative, rather than constitutive, of an understanding. Even if Homer records the god (in an even more ungodly way) engaging in reason giving, listing argument after argument, again Euthyphro faces the very same problem. For whatever Homer can directly convey is at most only regulative of a merely receptive understanding; it can never combine to be constitutive of an understanding (that is to say, such reason giving can never constitute unity). In other words, mere regulations cannot produce a practice (which completes a form). Thus, no matter what the content of Homer's production is, with it he cannot directly transfer an understanding. Neither can even a *god* transfer an understanding.

Because Euthyphro only uses his understanding in a receptive way, everything he claims to know must be derivative. However, there can be nothing derivative about a god. Thus, Euthyphro's way of knowing is antithetical to the nature of the divine. Consequently, with his merely receptive use of his understanding, Euthyphro can never recognise an understanding. An understanding is something singular or unified (i.e., something that manifests necessity).

However, if Euthyphro transforms his understanding from its merely receptive or containing use to an inventive activity, he will move from rehearsing something essentially alien to the activity of the understanding to manifesting a form inseparable from the activity of his understanding — thereby, he will show (rather than merely attempt to tell) an understanding. Euthyphro can thus only recognise the unity or necessity of an understanding on having his understanding instantiate that form (which constitutes the understanding). That is to say, to understand (or to recognise an understanding) Euthyphro must engage in an activity or invention rather than merely a receipt. Only at that point of activity (which reaches completion) does authority move from being extrinsic to being intrinsic.

Socrates wants Euthyphro to show such an understanding; he asks him to show something singular not manifold (see 6d). What is singular differs from what is manifold as self-motion differs from motion from without. Thus, to show an understanding is to manifest self-motion; it is not to transfer a motion (via a telling).¹

1.4 SLAVES AND VALUE

Because Euthyphro does not know what it is to have a practice, his understanding is merely receptive rather than inventive. Consequently, he does not know how to go into an understanding. That is to say, he does not know how to have an understanding. For this reason, his explanations remain extrinsic. Thus, even though he tries to imitate Zeus, he does not thereby draw any closer to the divine. He imitates the gods in a similar way to the way a painter imitates the work of a carpenter (*Republic* 10.597e). In the latter case, producing a picture of a bed does not make the painter any more like the carpenter who builds the bed. The painter according to Plato does not engage in a practice. Similarly, Euthyphro becomes no more divine with his imitation of the gods. If anything, Euthyphro further removes himself from the divine; for, both the form and the content of his actions are un-godlike — the gods do not imitate.

It may appear that unlike Socrates, Euthyphro does not believe that piety involves becoming like a god. For he believes that the pious are to the gods what slaves are to their masters (see 13d). Thus to be pious is precisely not to be like a god. However, this separation between masters and slaves involves no separation involving anything intrinsic to their natures. Rather, the difference is merely extrinsic: each merely plays a different role in relation to the other. The salient difference therefore is that masters possess objects of extrinsic value while slaves do not — or more specifically: masters are the possessors, slaves, the possessions.

By dialogue's end, Euthyphro has cast himself as a slave to the gods. His service is to give them 'honor, reverence and gratitude' (15a). Thus, he supposes that the gods value what he most values, but what he fails to secure (cf 3bc). Because Euthyphro has a merely receptive take on value, it turns out that he can never be in genuine control of what he values. Plato shows this throughout the dialogue. Everything that Euthyphro values, is out of his control. First, he confesses that people pay him no respect. Then, he describes how his own slave, in a drunken rage, kills his father's slave. In turn, he tells how his murderous slave dies of neglect. Further, while Euthyphro boasts of his wisdom of divine matters, it is not long before he confesses that his propositions refuse to stay where he puts them (11b) — they eliminate each other. In the first case, he blames others for not honouring him in the way that they should. In the second case, he blames his father for the neglect of his slave. In the third case, he blames Socrates for making his beliefs fly out of his control (11c). Just as Euthyphro's propositions annihilate each other, so his take on value defeats itself. The only way that he can seize genuine control over what he values is for him to start valuing in a radically different way — it is for him to start blaming himself (see *Protagoras* chapter).

1.5 EXTRINSIC VALUE AND DEICIDE

Because Euthyphro uses his understanding in a merely receptive way, he automatically and unwittingly strips the intrinsic meaning away from what Socrates says. Thus, even though at times, he more or less repeats Socrates, in doing so he not only fails to preserve Socrates' meaning, he inverts it. With this imitation, or replication, he transforms what is intrinsic into what is extrinsic.² Thus, when Socrates first suggests that 'what [the gods] love is pious' (9d) he expresses what is for him a truism. However, when Euthyphro repeats it (9e), he strips it of its necessity, leaving something incoherent. Socrates confronts his understanding with the dilemma:

[i]s the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods? (10a)

Both horns promise to equally compromise Euthyphro's extrinsic take on value. The former keeps the nature of piety extrinsic but quickly leads to a reductio. Following this horn, Euthyphro supposes that with his servitude to the gods he can provide what they value. With his 'honor, reverence and gratitude' he supposes that he gives the gods what they want. He thereby deprives the gods of control over what they value. Consequently, the gods become slaves to their slave. Here Euthyphro fashions the gods in his own image: in prosecuting his father Euthyphro becomes his (dead and murderous) slave's servant (see 9a). When Socrates confronts Euthyphro with the ungodly dependence of the gods on their servants, Euthyphro quickly recants and admits that the gods cannot benefit from the pious (see 15b). With this move, he catches himself on the other horn of the dilemma. Because he can give no extrinsic content to what is pious he is left with an empty (i.e., contentless) concept.

1.6 INVENTING THE DIVINE AND THE FORM OF PIETY

That dilemma is only a dilemma for Euthyphro's receptive understanding; it is no dilemma at all for Socrates' inventive understanding. With Socrates' intrinsic understanding of what it is to be pious, what it is to love, and what it is to be divine, both horns of the supposed dilemma harmlessly echo, or reiterate, each other. They both express the same necessary truth. What Socrates is bound to deny is not one of the horns but merely what they contain for the receptive understanding; namely, that 'there is something loved and — a different thing — loving' (10a).

Piety for Socrates involves one becoming 'as much like a god as a human can' (*Republic* 10.513b). This definition is unhelpful to Euthyphro. For here Socrates offers no real content for him to receive. Euthyphro's receptive understanding can contain no real notion of the divine (he assumes the gods are like himself, merely receptive). Thus, Euthyphro just becomes bewildered when Socrates challenges him to locate the genuine source of his authority. He looks right past the divine when looking for that source.

When Socrates turns Euthyphro's understanding back to the gods in order to find some content for piety, he essentially demands that Euthyphro discover what is intrinsic, not what is extrinsic. Socrates chases Euthyphro's conception of authority and value back to the gods. Here he summons Euthyphro's understanding to the task of recognising a unity. Thereby he challenges Euthyphro to discover that different sense of authority, which promises to make sense of his own claim of authority. Of course, no sense can be made of Euthyphro and Homer's reports concerning enmity between the gods. However, in following that fictitious chain of extrinsic authority back to its supposed source, Socrates invites Euthyphro to discover and manifest that antithetical conception of authority and value; thereby he invites him to discover the poverty or godlessness of his previous conception.

Thus, in forcing that dilemma upon Euthyphro, Socrates summons him to go into the nature of the divine rather than pass over it. To achieve that end, Euthyphro can have no extrinsic markers to his success. Rather, he must force his own understanding to plot and decide its own success. Here the understanding comes to know itself. Thus, in its progress toward manifesting a singularity (of form), Euthyphro must forego his previous concept of truth as receipt and instead he must start in on an invention. With this responsibility, his understanding must keep itself in check. It must therefore invent a practice for itself; thereby

his understanding becomes a product of its own activity and so it becomes godlike. With this practice, his understanding will come to know itself, and thereby, it will manifest a divine form.

Thus, after pursuing the genuine authority of what his understanding formally contained, with genuine authority he will recognise that his former understanding possessed no authority whatsoever. Further, in his inventive search for a solution to escape that dilemma concerning the genuine source of authority for the receptive understanding, he will discover it is no dilemma at all. He will recognise that it was not what Socrates said that caused him the problem; rather it was how he received what Socrates said. (For Euthyphro reads Socrates in the same way he reads Homer.)

With his peculiar form of communication, Socrates frustrates Euthyphro's mere receipt of content. For, the content is a contradiction to the receptive understanding. At the same time, Socrates leaves Euthyphro's receptive understanding to contest that content. With this, he invites Euthyphro to a practice, through which he will recognise the unity of what was formally incommensurable. The solution to the dilemma therefore is not to look to what the gods love to find out what is pious; rather, the solution is to become a god to recognise what is pious or godly.

1.7 VALUERS AND VALUE

Because Euthyphro separates off the object of value or knowledge from the act of valuing or knowing, he does not recognise what Socrates communicates. Objects of value or knowledge always impinge upon him from without. When Euthyphro takes the natures of value and agency in this way, he essentially consigns the nature of value to be always extrinsic to the nature of the valuer. Under this conception, the act of valuing is not itself a source of value. Euthyphro's muddle over the nature of value is grounded in his misunderstanding of the nature of the divine. This latter misunderstanding is precisely a misunderstanding of what it is to understand. For, according to Plato, to understand the divine aright is at once to manifest value, understanding, love and being.

When Euthyphro looks to the gods he does not recognise intrinsic value. He goes straight through the gods as valuers to find an extrinsic object of value. Thereby, he separates off the object of the gods' love from their act of loving (9e). In making this disjunction, however, Euthyphro can ultimately make no sense at all of value. For at the end of any chain of extrinsic value there must be something of intrinsic value (cf. *Ion* 533d-535a). If the gods do not mark the end of such a chain in which they appear then nothing can act as a source of such value. Euthyphro's take on value thus leads to that dilemma (see 10a).

Euthyphro's quite fundamental misunderstanding of the divine is thus a by-product of his own passive understanding. His understanding projects something old rather than gathers something new. Euthyphro does not recognise the gods as manifesting value because it is not possible to passively recognise intrinsic value. An understanding must itself become active to recognise, and, thereby, to manifest, intrinsic value. Because Euthyphro's understanding is merely receptive rather than inventive, he cannot recognise the gods as sources of value.

Euthyphro can free himself from the dilemma only by ceasing to receive its meaning (from without) and instead by beginning to gather or invent an understanding. In other words, Euthyphro must deny that the gods value in the same way he values. To gather his understanding in this way Euthyphro would already himself be valuing in a different way; he would recognise or realise something actively rather than passively. With that activity, he would immediately collapse the divide between the valuer and the object of value. And, in doing so, Euthyphro himself would also manifest value.³ Thus, when Euthyphro comes to realise that the gods *must* value in a fundamentally opposite way to the way in which he values, he thereby in fact begins to value as the gods value.

NOTES

¹ With each of his works, Plato completes a form and thereby shows something. However, he does not show all his narrators showing or manifesting an understanding. Apollodorus, for

example, does not engage in a practice as he recalls the events of the *Symposium*. Similarly, with his *Parmenides* Plato shows a practice for the understanding, however his narrator Cephalus, in merely recalling an account of those events, does not show his understanding; rather, Cephalus is comical or ridiculous.

² Compare how Cebes regurgitates Socrates' argument from recollection and in doing so inverts its meaning (see *Phaedo* chapter).

³ Socrates also invites Meno (who expresses the same failure of the understanding) to gather a new understanding of value. Socrates shows Meno how Meno's slave can manifest a type of possession antithetical to the type that Meno displays in owning that slave. He shows that Meno's slave can possess something — an understanding — that Meno does not thereby possess (by his possession of the slave). Here, Socrates introduces Meno to a type of possession or value that is neither transitive nor directly transferable. This showing by the slave, thus, summons Meno to conflate, rather than separate, that activity that brings about or marks possession, and the object of value. Accordingly, Socrates invites Meno to associate value with an intrinsic form or activity rather than with extrinsic content.

PROTAGORAS (NOTE)

UNDERSTANDING UNDERSTANDING AND THE SEARCH FOR BEAUTY

2.1 THE FORM OF REASON AND THE FORM OF POETRY

Euthyphro shows a connection between the form of genuine communication and the form of being. Plato understands being itself in the same way as he understands the nature of the divine: they both essentially manifest (or are constituted by) self-motion (see *Phaedrus* 245c). Direct communication in contrast involves an opposite type of motion; for with direct communication, meaning impinges on the understanding from without. The form of direct communication thus frustrates the form that constitutes being.

Socrates' interlocutors are almost invariably passive;¹ consequently, they are direct communicators. They not only deliver and receive arguments as direct communication. They also treat fables in the same way. As a result, for them, all communication is direct, all meaning and being is given; accordingly, all value, possession and authority are extrinsic.

Initially the sophist Protagoras' approach looks like an exception to this rule; for he seems to differentiate between argument and poetry. In doing so, he seems to acknowledge two ways of communicating. Early on in the dialogue bearing his name, Protagoras suggests that in ancient times sophists disguised their teaching as poetry (316d). Protagoras considers that ancient approach misguided. He thinks that such masking prevents the majority of people receiving the sophists' teaching (317ab). He essentially concludes, if people are readily to understand teaching and communication, it must be pure in form and unadorned.

According to this purity, Protagoras professes to teach only 'sound deliberation' (319a). Even so, he sees a close connection between sound deliberation (or, how he thinks we should reason) and how he thinks we should understand poetry. He claims:

the greatest part of a man's education is to be in command of poetry, by which I mean the ability to understand the words of the poets ... and to know how to analyze a poem. (339a)

In elevating the importance of our ability to understand poetry, Protagoras seems to put himself onside with Socrates. However, their understandings could not be more at odds. Plato quickly introduces us to this divide by showing Protagoras to apply to an ode what turns out to be his purely reductive (or analytic) operation of reason.

With his method of analysis, Protagoras cannot recognise any meaning that does not merely rehearse or negate that with which he is already familiar. Thus, his method cannot reveal to his understanding any genuinely new meaning. For when Protagoras takes poetry as direct communication, when he reads a poem's meaning in a piecemeal way, he can *recognise* those pieces only as permutations of what he already knows. In other words, his understanding can recognise only what it already passively possesses. Here, recognition requires a match already lying in wait in memory.

Applying this method, Protagoras accuses Simonides, the author of the ode, of inconsistency. For at one point Simonides asserts '[f]or a man to become good truly is hard', while further on in the ode Simonides denies the truth of Pittacus' claim, '[h]ard it is to be good' (339bc). In claiming that Simonides is inconsistent, Protagoras conflates and so destroys a crucial distinction between being and becoming to which Simonides means to draw our attention. In reading those two claims regarding being and becoming as inconsistent Protagoras, at least according to Socrates' lights, not only quite fundamentally misunderstands the ode but he also misunderstands the nature of, and the necessary connection between, being and value; with this Protagoras also misunderstands what it is to understand.

Because of the way he reads Simonides, it is apparent that when Protagoras suggests that the ancient sophists disguised or masked their teachings as poetry, he does not thereby recognise their poems as indirect communication. Rather, he merely sees the form of those poems distracting most people from recognising what they directly communicate. Protagoras thus has no notion of indirect communication.

In showing Protagoras how he reads over Simonides' distinction between being and becoming, Socrates also shows him a practice for his understanding.² Once we recognise Socrates' practice, it is clear what Protagoras' understanding lacks. For because the content, rather than the form of Protagoras' understanding determines his reading, his reading has no aim, and with no aim, it has no activity to complete, and thus no criteria for success (or failure). Accordingly, as soon as Protagoras passively recognises an inconsistency his understanding rests content as if it has thereby found what it ought to find. Protagoras' method is thus really no method at all. Rather than recognising what Plato counts as meaning or value, his method essentially annihilates that value.

In contrast to Protagoras' way of reading, Socrates' method has a clear criterion for its success or failure. Before Socrates' understanding begins its work, he assumes that the other's communication is divine. Socrates thus searches solely for necessity; and he shows that the only way to discover (or recognise) necessity is through the understanding completing an activity. Thus, according to Socrates, it is the form of the understanding, rather than its received content, that determines meaning. Consequently, in order for the understanding to understand, it must be active rather than passive.

According to this method, the form or 'the overall structure' of what Simonides communicates determines the meaning of what he says. The aim of this determination of meaning is for every element of that meaning to fit, or, in other words, for the meaning of every element to be determined such that it 'feels correct in its position' (344a-c). This feeling of fittedness is an aesthetic feeling of necessity.

Socrates' search for meaning or necessity is thus his search for beauty. Because an object of beauty cannot be a mere aggregate, we cannot recognise beauty through any passive receipt of the understanding.³ Thus, objects of beauty necessarily employ an indirect mode of communication. With its search for beauty, an understanding must therefore actively gather, and so manifest, a beautiful form. Hence, an understanding can only recognise beauty, upon actively manifesting its form.⁴ There is thus doubleness to the understanding's endeavour.

For Socrates, all meaning entails this unifying and so manifesting activity of the understanding. Thus, to seek an understanding is to seek unity. With that aim, the understanding is summoned to an activity through which it must transcend any express meaning, and through the completion of its activity, introduce or gather to itself new meaning (or new form).

Thus, the only way for one to recognise that a work expresses or manifests necessity is to treat its communication as indirect, and, through the activity of the understanding, manifest the form of that necessity in one's own understanding. Socrates, thus, with his reading of Simonides, shows Protagoras a connection between practice, activity, or form, and meaning, or value. In doing so, he connects that activity that constitutes being with the activity that is involved in manifesting value or manifesting a beautiful form.

2.2 BLAMING AND BECOMING

As long as an understanding like Protagoras' remains passive, it will, when frustrated, project blame. For, even though, with such an understanding, the constitutive elements of meaning are always both given and historically familiar, those elements nonetheless always impinge upon the understanding from without rather than arising from within. Consequently, such an understanding, when it is unsatisfied, faults the other; for, in such cases, the other fails to impinge upon the understanding in what is believed to be a sufficient way.

Under Socrates' method, where the understanding is active, the reverse form of blame is typical. For, when his understanding is frustrated, Socrates is obliged to blame himself. For, his frustration results from something his understanding fails to do or fails to secure. Thus, we repeatedly find Socrates blaming himself when he cannot make sense of what his interlocutors assert. With this self-rebuke, Socrates shows his interlocutors something that they must first put themselves through before they can give expression to something that Socrates can understand.⁵

Even though blame is central to both the passive and active understandings, this does not mean both uses of the understanding are moral. For the blame that emanates from Protagoras lacks an agent. In contrast, the blaming of the active understanding is essentially moral, for its aim is agency (i.e., being). With that aim, it seeks to recognise the being of the other, and, in doing so, it identifies with the activity of that being.⁶ Simonides and Socrates do not take being as a given, for them 'to become good truly is hard'. For, they regard being as something that must be won through the unifying activity of the understanding. Until the understanding works that unity and so manifests value, it must continue to chastise itself.

From this understanding of what it is to know, to value, and to be, we can gather how Socrates interprets the Delphic inscription: *know thyself* (see 343b; *Phaedrus* 230a). According to Socrates' showing, the call to self-knowledge, involves creating, through unifying practices, a self that can be both the subject and object of knowledge. According to this interpretation of the Delphic call to activity, beauty is all-important; for only beauty fails to defile being. Only beauty summons being. From this perspective, the Delphic inscription *know thyself* is the necessary and sufficient condition for fulfilling the demands of the other inscription *nothing in excess* (see 343b) — which is the negative condition for achieving the economy of beauty.

NOTES

- ¹ In varying degrees, Plato shows Parmenides, Zeno, Meno's slave and Alcibiades to be exceptions to this rule (see *Parmenides*, *Meno* and *Symposium*).
- ² In Book I of the *Republic*, Socrates gives the same kind of instruction to Polemarchus in relation to his apparent misreading of Simonides (*Republic* 1.331d+).
- ³ In his *Republic* discussion Socrates suggests that the eyes of a statue are not painted the most beautiful colour (purple) because what is at stake is the beauty of the entire statue and not merely of the eyes (*Republic* 4.420cd). Here, Socrates emphasises that beauty attaches to form and not merely to content.
- ⁴ In *Phaedrus*, Socrates suggests that our fall from the presence of truth or beauty was our fall from being (*Phaedrus* 246c+).
- ⁵ In *Gorgias*, Plato offers a variation on this pattern. First Polus (*Gorgias* 461bc) in relation to Gorgias and then Callicles in relation to Polus (*Gorgias* 482d-483a) blame Socrates for having his interlocutors contradict themselves. Callicles says 'if a person is too ashamed to say what he thinks, he's forced to contradict himself' (*Gorgias* 483a). Thus, both Polus and Callicles blame Socrates for manipulating his interlocutors to contradict themselves. According to the passive understanding, even their own conflicting expression merely points to something the other must change.
- ⁶ When Socrates finishes explaining the ode to Protagoras, he says: '[a]nd that ... is what I think was going through Simonides' mind when he composed this ode' (347a). Thus, while Socrates aims at a unified understanding of a work he thereby not only aims to unify his own understanding, but he also seeks to engage with the unity (or being) of the other. He can only achieve this unity by thinking the very best of the other.

APOLOGY

BEAUTY AS THE LANGUAGE OF THE DIVINE AND IMPIETY AS DIRECT COMMUNICATION

ABSTRACT 14

3.1 THE HARDEST SIN TO AVOID AND THE ONE UNFORGIVABLE SIN..... 14

3.2 ARGUMENTS AND FABLES 14

3.3 JUDGING (FOR) ONESELF AND JUDGING (FOR) OTHERS 14

3.4 CONVICTIONS AND CONCURRENCE..... 15

3.5 SHOW AND TELL..... 16

3.6 TEACHING AND SUMMONING..... 17

3.7 CONFESSING IMPIETY AND MANIFESTING PIETY..... 18

3.8 MANIFESTING IMPIETY AND DIRECTLY COMMUNICATING..... 19

NOTES 20

ABSTRACT

Plato's *Apology* concerns itself with the nature of piety. However, nowhere in its pages does it tell us what piety is. Instead, it shows us — and this is significant. For, if it were to tell us, it would thereby cease to show us. For, according to Plato, if philosophers are to avoid impiety, they must be artists and so, must produce only (the economy of) beauty (and never the gratuity of commentary). In order to communicate this notion of divine communication as the manifestation of beauty, Plato shows us the self-mover, Socrates.

3.1 THE HARDEST SIN TO AVOID AND THE ONE UNFORGIVABLE SIN

For Nietzsche, the *one unforgivable sin* is committed when writers leave off showing for the sake of telling. If we read Plato in the expectation that he does not commit this sin — that is to say, if we read Plato in the expectation that he is an indirect rather than a direct communicator — it turns out that his quite determinate and indirectly related notion of impiety matches Nietzsche's notion. We can most clearly see this in the *Apology*, where, through a showing rather than a direct telling, Socrates, and indirectly Plato, defends himself against the charge of impiety. By dialogue's end, Plato firmly establishes himself, and his Socrates, as divine communicators.

However, according to Plato's divine standard, almost everyone commits the metaphysical sin: not only are Socrates' accusers impious, but so are most of his friends. It turns out that impiety is the hardest sin to avoid; for, we can avoid it, only by becoming gods ourselves. Only in a godlike state do we cease to brutalise what it is to be (a god). For Plato, a negative criterion for becoming a god involves our expression never extending beyond our practices (cf. 22d). From Plato's own practices, we can gather that a god is like a great and supremely confident artist: that is to say, someone who manifests beauty and refuses to talk about it (cf. e.g. *Phaedo* 100de).

3.2 ARGUMENTS AND FABLES

Plato is an artist-philosopher. That is to say, he primarily communicates his philosophy through a showing rather than a direct telling. According to this method — by which he seeks to conflate two apparently quite opposite modes of communication — Plato presents the fable of Socrates as the best of arguments. In making this implicit association — between the form of a life and the form of an argument — Plato invites us to rethink radically our understanding of what makes good arguments good; thereby, he also invites us to alter radically *how* we read his works.

Plato essentially invites us to read his arguments as if they are good fables. This does not mean that we should expect their meaning to be any less determinate or specific. Rather, it means that as readers we must do something quite specific if we are rightly to gather their meaning. For, rather than directly telling us something, or judging something for us, good arguments, like good fables, and like good people, show us something; and with their showing, they can elevate and thereby transform our understanding. For in order to appreciate a showing as a showing we must gather its form. With that activity, we aim to complete something; if successful, we will manifest the nature or form of what we appreciate. In this way, with his showing, Plato invites us, through our own practices, into a position from which we can recognise (or 'recollect') and so manifest what he indirectly communicates.

Plato's method of communication is not incidental to his philosophy. In fact, it is a manifestation and expression of his philosophy. For this reason we can understand Plato's thinking precisely through coming to understand why he communicates in the way he does. In the *Apology*, this thoroughgoing connection between his way of communicating and his philosophy is most clearly evident.

3.3 JUDGING (FOR) ONESELF AND JUDGING (FOR) OTHERS

Socrates' manner in the *Apology* differs markedly from his manner in other dialogues. For, the *Apology* marks the first and last time we hear Socrates address a crowd. In that address in

which he defends himself against charges of impiety and corrupting the youth of Athens, he shows an unerring confidence; he boldly asserts: I have wronged no one (cf. 37ab). In addition, he warns the jury: you will be guilty of 'mistreating the god's gift to you by condemning me' (30e). In the *Apology* Socrates quickly replaces his typical hyperbolic self-effacing manner with what appears to be an inflated estimation of himself.

Socrates goes on to attack both his accusers and the jury. First, he explicitly claims to be a better person than his accusers: he warns them that they can do him no harm; 'for', he says, 'I do not think it is permitted for a better man to be harmed by a worse' (30cd; also cf. esp. 26e-27a, also cf. 18a, 24c, 25c, 34b). In a similarly acerbic, disparaging and lofty manner, Socrates attacks those serving on the jury: first, he rehearses an occasion in which at least some jurors egged on illegal action (32b); further, he suggests that any man who considers that 'acting as a good man ... [is] the most important thing', will not survive long in public life (32e). He continues to lay it on by accusing some jury members of committing 'pitiful dramatics' and behaving like cowards thereby bringing 'shame' on the city and making it a 'laughingstock' (34c-35b).

After the jury finds Socrates guilty, and after one of his accusers, Meletus, asks for the death penalty, Socrates responds with his own counter-assessment: he instructs the jurors that they should reward him rather than punish him (36e-37a). When the jurors finally sentence him to death, Socrates passes his own damning judgement upon them. He addresses the jurors: 'I say gentlemen, to those who voted to kill me, that vengeance will come upon you immediately after my death ...' (39c).

Because of his unflinching criticism and condemnation of his accusers and the jury, the Socrates of the *Apology* does not seem to square with the humble and charitable (though undoubtedly ironic) Socrates of the other dialogues. In those other dialogues, in which Socrates prominently figures, Plato presents Socrates as an inversion of the character of his interlocutors. Thus, in many places, Socrates repeatedly professes complete ignorance when his interlocutors boast full and sure knowledge;¹ further, Socrates shows an exaggerated charity towards his conceited and muddled interlocutors. Socrates' interlocutors, on the other hand, are quick to attack and blame him when they show themselves unable to deliver on their boastings.

Most of Plato's other dialogues (in which Socrates prominently figures) also essentially depict trials. However, in those works Socrates' interlocutors are on trial. Socrates, as self-appointed prosecutor, ironically takes on the part of pupil; his interlocutors play their self-professed roles of teachers or direct communicators. In their conceit, his interlocutors consistently suppose that they know far more than they do know. Socrates in a sense gives them the benefit of the doubt. Even when things invariably go badly for them, Socrates' confidence in them does not wane. In the ensuing confusion, rather than blaming them for talking nonsense, either Socrates blames himself for not following their explanations or he suggests that they are playing with him. His self-deprecating manner coupled with his recalcitrance as a passive receiver, are key elements to Socrates' form of indirect communication. For, rather than judging something for them, Socrates intends his interlocutors to judge (for) themselves.

3.4 CONVICTIONS AND CONCURRENCE

Something of this familiar form, Socrates imposes upon his own trial. For, even though Socrates is supposed to be the one on trial, he nevertheless makes it clear that the jury is on trial. Even though he is charged with impiety, he warns the jurors that they will be guilty of impiety if they convict him. After the jurors convict and sentence him, Socrates expressly indicts them.

Unlike the play of those other dialogues however, in the *Apology* Socrates forces a trial on those who have no possibility of winning; for, the jury, being an aggregate, cannot genuinely act as a judge — it cannot act as its own judge and so the jury cannot judge another. Consequently, Socrates cannot genuinely communicate with it. He transforms his previously meek voice into one that is directly authoritative; and with it, he metes out to the jury what it

cannot mete out to itself. Socrates (as someone who is able to judge) rightly portrays himself as superior to the jury.

Rather than communicating with the jury, Socrates expressly judges it. His direct judgement does not count as communication, for, according to Socrates, genuine communication requires all parties to that communication to participate in a practice that they can complete. Genuine communication must therefore summon. However, the problem with the crowd is that it forms an aggregate that can never be a whole (*qua* unity); and so, as one, it can never participate in a practice. For this reason, a crowd cannot express or manifest value. Consequently, a crowd cannot manifest love or 'backlove' (see *Phaedrus* 255d) — the possibility of which is a necessary condition for genuine communication.

The jurors thus convict Socrates without themselves having reached a conviction — a slight weight of numbers decides the matter (36a). However, regardless of how many votes weigh in on a single side, there is no sense in which a jury can reach a genuine conviction.² For, there can be no genuine unity in its vote. At most, its votes can express a concurrence. Such a concurrence is extrinsic rather than intrinsic and so it can never express a unity, with it, there is no sense in which anything is completed. The jury's vote cannot therefore express a value. Genuine unity — which beauty, understanding, love, backlove and value manifest — involves a form completed. In his trial, Socrates thus faces a conception of value he confronts in his earlier meeting with Euthyphro.³ Socrates lets the jurors know that they are powerless to decide what is pious and that they threaten to harm only themselves with their decision (30c-e).

Thus, because Socrates does not think it is possible to communicate with a crowd, his manner in the *Apology* is hostile and condescending. In his speech, Socrates thus frustrates even the appearance of communication.

3.5 SHOW AND TELL

Even though Socrates does not think it is possible to communicate with the crowd, he nevertheless, it seems, sees himself having a duty to teach them (see 35c). However, there can be no teaching without communication. Furthermore, his duty to teach the jury seems to be in tension with what he asserts in his own defence. In fact, what Socrates claims in his own defence seems to deny his own history; for he denies ever having taught anyone anything. In addition, he goes so far as to label those who claim otherwise liars (33b).

Socrates is clearly a teacher in more than the negative sense in which he portrays himself in his *Apology* defence — where, at most, he claims merely to disabuse people of their conceit (see 21b+). We cannot escape this positive aspect of Plato's Socrates; for Plato casts him in that positive role throughout the dialogues. The positive aspect of Socrates' teaching does not take the form of him directly transferring (or telling) something to his interlocutors (that is, it does not take the form of his judging something for them); but rather it involves Socrates showing his interlocutors something.⁴ Socrates thereby offers something for his interlocutors to gather. In this way Socrates invites others to participate in a practice whereby they (rather than Socrates) are able to tell themselves something.

Given that Socrates is a teacher, how are we to understand his claim that he never taught anyone anything? We cannot resolve this question by simply admitting him as teacher and then, in turn, denying that he succeeded in that mission. For according to Plato's myth (within which Plato reflexively enfolds himself — as its author), Plato is Socrates' star pupil. Thus, we cannot deny that Plato intends us to believe that Socrates was a teacher who enjoyed a measure of success. There thus seems to be a genuine conflict between what Socrates does and what he denies he does.

Such tensions are a mark of Socrates' indirect form of communication and are an essential element of his method of teaching. Thus, in asserting that he has never taught anyone anything, Socrates teaches; for he frustrates our passive receipt of that judgement. In this way, rather than judging something for us he invites or summons our understanding to resolve the apparent conflict and thereby judge something, or gather meaning, for ourselves.⁵

Resolving the tension between Socrates' activity of teaching in his very denial of teaching is thus straightforward: Socrates merely denies teaching after the passive manner of

which he is accused. (We can make no sense of Meletus' indictment if we read it as accusing Socrates of corrupting the youth of Athens by the teaching method Socrates actually employs.) Socrates thus eschews directly communicating judgements to people in that manner in which Meletus seeks directly to transfer his judgement (concerning Socrates) to the jury.

3.6 TEACHING AND SUMMONING

For Socrates, teaching requires indirect communication. Because of the gathering, and the subsequent manifestation of value or form, invited by indirect communication, it is not possible to teach a crowd — for, only wholes (insofar as they are unities), not aggregates, can manifest value.

Nevertheless, after rebuking the jurors Socrates concludes his defence by pointing out his duty to teach them (35c). How are we to understand this claim? If Socrates means here what Meletus means by 'teaching', then Socrates seems to corner himself. For according to Socrates Meletus' way of teaching is counterfeit. And for this reason, it is inconceivable that Socrates thinks himself duty-bound to do what Meletus does. Moreover, if we are to understand Socrates' claimed duty in this way, Socrates seems to belie a claim implicit in his own defence — namely, his denial that he teaches after that manner.

On the other hand, Socrates also corners himself but in a different way if he means here by 'teaching' what he regards as genuine teaching. For, in that case, he sees himself having a duty to do what he regards as impossible. For, he does not think it is possible to communicate with the jury.

Socrates' criticism of the jurors, followed by his claim to teach them, is a summoning response to a sophistical manoeuvre expressed within Meletus' speech to the jury: Meletus warns the jury to 'be careful not to be deceived by an accomplished speaker like' Socrates (17ab). Here Meletus rehearses an old accusation against Socrates: namely, that he makes 'the worse into the stronger argument' (19b). In so doing, Meletus seeks to determine the jury's judgement. For, in making that charge against Socrates, Meletus essentially warns the jury: *if you are persuaded by Socrates' defence, you have been deceived*. Thus, regardless of whether or not Socrates persuasively defends himself, the jury must find him guilty.

Socrates in his defence denies teaching (or directly transferring judgements to) people after the manner of which Meletus accuses him. However, on the heels of that denial Socrates harshly judges the jury and goes on to describe that very activity as teaching. Thus, Socrates appears to communicate directly a judgement not only to the jury but also for the jury. In doing so, Socrates falls in with the manner of communication and teaching of which Meletus accuses him (and so he falls in with that manner of teaching in which he denies participating).

However, because Meletus calls no witnesses to support his claim that Socrates teaches (cf. 33d+), the jurors are cornered. And they are cornered precisely by Socrates' own claim to teach them. If they are to convict him, they must (if they are doing their duty — see 35c) base that conviction on evidence that Socrates teaches. And the jurors seem to have no direct evidence of this apart from what Socrates claims to do to them. However, if the jurors recognise that Socrates has taught — that is, if they accept his harsh judgement of them and his (bullying) warning to them that they will be guilty of impiety in convicting him — then the content of those judgements from Socrates, prevent the jury from convicting him. In other words, his judging for them, determines them to free him. However, because of the nature of Socrates' determination of them, he becomes guilty of that with which Meletus charges him; and for that reason he invites his own conviction. However, if the jurors convict him on that score, they at once lose the warrant for that verdict. For, in making that conviction, they practically deny Socrates has determined them; consequently, they do not recognise him as a teacher.

Socrates, thus, catches the jurors between the form and the content of his (direct) teaching and thereby he introduces them to his own conception of communication. Given the content of Socrates' express claim to teach, he forces the members of the jury to judge something for themselves. Thus, while Meletus' sophism aims to pacify the jurors, Socrates' response aims to summon them to an activity.

3.7 CONFESSING IMPIETY AND MANIFESTING PIETY

The jurors therefore cannot passively receive Socrates' defence against Meletus' charge of teaching. Rather, with his admission that he is a teacher Socrates summons each member of the jury to an activity through which each will recognise his innocence. In addition, that activity will transform each member of the jury's understanding of what it is genuinely to teach. Socrates, through a showing rather than a telling, invites each member of the jury to a new understanding. Each juror will recognise that new meaning only upon his understanding (actively) manifesting its work. Socrates plays the same game in his defence against the charge of impiety. In this case, he summons each member of the jury to a new understanding of 'piety' and 'the divine'.

Defending himself against the charge of impiety, Socrates once again appears to produce for the jury the evidence that Meletus' indictment lacks. Socrates' story begins with his friend Chaerephon asking the oracle at Delphi: is there any one wiser than Socrates? '[T]he Pythian replied that no one [is] wiser' (21a). Socrates goes on to describe how he attempted to 'refute the oracle' (21c). He therefore appears to confess to the charge of impiety; for in questioning the oracle's judgement Socrates questions the divine.

However, there is a catch which prevents the jury from passively receiving Socrates' testimony as evidence on which to convict him of impiety. For if the jurors accept that Socrates questioned the judgement of the oracle, they must also accept as divine that which Socrates questioned. Thus, in accepting Socrates' testimony as self-incriminating, the members of the jury can only avoid impiety themselves by not doing what Socrates reports he did. The jurors must therefore accept without question the oracle's judgement: that no man is wiser than Socrates. However, with that concession, Socrates escapes the court's jurisdiction; for in acknowledging Socrates' superior wisdom, each member of the jury removes his authority to sit in judgement over him. For this reason, if, on Socrates' testimony, the jurors convict him, they indirectly indict themselves.

This indirect aspect of Socrates' communication might appear purely negative. For Socrates appears to give the jurors something, but no sooner than they receive it, it disappears. For in the extension of their receipt Socrates indirectly forces the members of the jury to resolve or gather something, which in turn removes (or more correctly transforms) the content of what they previously received. If the jurors attempt to hold on to what they initially (directly) received and if they in turn use it against Socrates, they thereby become guilty of that of which they convict him. Socrates rightly warns the jurors that they will be guilty of impiety if they convict him.

However, this is not the end of Socrates' play. Socrates secretes something positive within the resolution invited by this indirect communication. He describes how he treated the oracle's judgement as a riddle. Because of this, Socrates' story is itself a riddle: the oracle judges Socrates as the wisest human being. Consequently, Socrates must also be the most pious. However, Socrates questions that divine judgement. Thus, the jurors cannot regard him as pious. For, his questioning seems to falsify the very judgement that he questions. Hence, it seems each juror can unquestioningly accept the oracles' judgement only if he denies that Socrates questioned it. However, in questioning it Socrates claims to be obeying rather than disobeying the oracle (23a; 29d). He boldly asserts: '[b]e sure that this is what the god orders me to do' (30a).

Each juror can only make sense of Socrates' story by somehow transcending or resolving this apparent contradiction; and each juror can transcend the contradiction only by transforming something about his own understanding of 'piety' and 'the divine'. Socrates' key to accomplishing this task targets each juror's conception of how the divine communicates. For, Socrates describes how he treated the apparently clear judgement from the oracle as a riddle (21b); that is to say, Socrates does not regard the god as a direct communicator. (Or, in other words, Socrates thinks that meaning is something that must be gathered rather than directly received. In his questioning, Socrates thus shows something of the nature of wisdom: wisdom is active rather than passive.) Indeed, without each juror assuming that the divine communicates directly there is no ground in the story Socrates tells for supposing that Socrates

is impious. However, what is important for each juror is not merely to identify Socrates' assumption about divine communication, but to recognise its necessity; that recognition will involve each juror gathering something about the (necessary) nature of the divine.

One of Socrates' main targets throughout the dialogues is the sophists — or the self-professed teachers of virtue. The foundation for the sophists' impiety or ungodliness is precisely the way they communicate. Sophists not only claim to know what virtue is but they also claim to be able to teach their knowledge directly to others; and through receiving that teaching, they claim, their pupils become better (cf. e.g. *Protagoras* 318a). However, this is a passive (and so incoherent) conception of betterment.

This passivity is the result of the gratuity of the sophists' mode of direct communication. If the sophists were genuinely virtuous, then their knowledge would be sufficiently expressed in, and so communicated through, their practices. The gratuity of an additional telling would undermine that possible showing; for, virtuous people express necessity in the economical form of activity that constitutes their being. For this reason we cannot understand the divine to be a direct communicator; for direct communication is antithetical to (and so destructive of) the economy of divine expression.

(Or, to put it another way: if Socrates received the judgement of the oracle as direct communication, he would thereby behave impiously. For, piety, according to Socrates, involves becoming as much like a god as is humanly possible (cf. *Republic* 513b). And, there is nothing divine about passive receipt — the divine does not directly receive anything from without. For, the divine is a source of motion rather than a recipient of motion (cf. *Phaedrus* 245c+).)

Within his *Apology* speech of defence, Socrates shows (rather than tells) the jury the type of activity to which he summons each juror. Consequently (because Socrates shows rather than merely tells), in order for the jurors each to recognise that activity as a gathering each must participate in the same kind of activity himself. Genuinely to recognise or to recollect — which is necessary in order truly to understand — involves manifesting something of the nature of that which is recognised.

Within his defence speech, Socrates relates to the jury a story centring on his own activity of gathering. Socrates' story ends with him claiming to be under the direct orders from the god (30a). From the context of that claim, it is clear that that supposed order from the divine Socrates does not directly receive, but he rather gathers, completes and so delivers to himself. Socrates thus transforms that apparently clear but external judgement from the oracle — a judgement from without — into a divine command, which he issues to himself. Socrates thereby *recognises* something divine. In the case of his divine sign, Socrates must convert the negativity of its stipulations (the voice never tells Socrates what to do, only what not to do — see 31d) into something positive and so self-sanctioned.⁶ Thus, through his activity, Socrates comes to command himself; and thereby he comes to manifest something divine. Thus, because Socrates *recognises* the command as divine on completing (the form of) that very command, he shows himself to be divine. With this Socrates shows (rather than tells) the jury what activity it is that truly defines piety.

Thus, Socrates shows what he had to do in order to understand or *recognise* the divine voice as divine. In transforming that judgement from the divine, Socrates shows the jury the nature of the divine; for he manifests the divine in his own nature. With this showing, Socrates shows each juror what he must do in order to understand or recognise Socrates' own divine voice. For just as the oracle's communication summoned Socrates, so too Socrates summons each juror. However, it is up to each juror to recognise the divine nature of Socrates; for in order to recognise the nature of the divine each juror must manifest (as backlove) something of the form of that nature himself.

3.8 MANIFESTING IMPIETY AND DIRECTLY COMMUNICATING

Apart from the jury, Meletus is of course the impious one of the dialogue. But his impiety does not arise merely from his indictment against Socrates. For ironically Meletus' charge of impiety against Socrates is justified if Socrates is a direct communicator. But Socrates is not a

direct communicator. Thus, Meletus' impiety is grounded in him not appreciating Socrates' mode of communication; and that lack of appreciation (that is to say, his assumption that Socrates is a direct communicator) surely arises from Meletus' own direct or passive mode of communication. Thus, Meletus is impious precisely because he is a direct communicator.

Without Meletus tying the content of what he says to a showing (or, in other words, without his communication resulting from a practice), he ends up asserting things that he cannot show. Consequently, Meletus removes himself furthest from the divine. (Socrates in contrast, shows or manifests something he cannot directly tell — thus, with this activity, Socrates is far closer to pure being.)

Because direct communication is impious, it turns out that there is little difference in Plato's fable between Socrates' apparent friends and his foes. For Socrates' friends are just as much direct communicators as are Meletus and Euthyphro. In *Crito* and *Phaedo*, as Socrates awaits death, his friends continue to treat him as a direct communicator. In the *Phaedo*, Simmias and Cebes readily find fault with almost everything Socrates argues. They thereby, indirectly though quite unquestionably find fault with Socrates. (Here, Socrates' own friends indict him.) Socrates cannot counter this impiety with impiety — he cannot directly tell his friends where they go wrong lest he become guilty of their indictment.

Socrates calls a halt to their *ad hominem* attack by warning: misology and misanthropy have a common passive cause (*Phaedo* 89d+). Simmias and Cebes continually find fault with Socrates not because of what Socrates says but because of the way they receive what he says. They find fault because they assume Socrates is a direct communicator; and that assumption entails cynicism or misanthropy — or, more precisely, it entails the implicit belief that Socrates is impious. Directly receiving communication is necessarily insufficient to the end of securing conviction because there can be nothing genuinely completed with motion from without.

In connecting misology and misanthropy, Socrates summons his friends to an activity that will counter their impiety (or passivity): he summons them to gather the connection between the form of good people and good arguments. Thereby he invites his friends to stop directly receiving and instead to gather the meaning of his arguments. That is, he indirectly invites them to read his arguments as if they were fables. (Or, in other words, Socrates indirectly invites his interlocutors to recognise as stronger what they previously received as weaker arguments.) Thus, from the perspective of the active understanding, that of which Meletus accuses Socrates is correct: Socrates does invent the divine and he does make the weaker into the stronger argument. However, from the same (active) perspective, these claims cease to be grounds for his conviction; rather they establish his innocence.

Throughout this play of the dialogues, Plato indirectly warns us — or, more correctly, he has us warn ourselves — that we will become his foes and will be guilty of impiety if we read him as a direct communicator. But, in order to recognise that warning we must have already recognised Plato as a divine communicator.

NOTES

¹ We do not hear Socrates' claims of ignorance after the early and early-middle dialogues. However, this is not to say his method changes from indirect to a more direct form of communication — see fn. 4 below.

² Cf. *Gorgias* 473e-474b.

³ Euthyphro believes that what is pious is decided merely by a concurrence between the gods (see *Euthyphro* 9e). He thus has an extrinsic (and so ungodly and incoherent) conception of authority, love and value (see *Euthyphro* chapter).

⁴ It may appear that Socrates descends from a showing in the early dialogues to a more direct telling in the middle dialogues. For example, in *Phaedo* and the final eight books of the *Republic* Socrates seems to directly tell his interlocutors various things. However, he introduces content to his apparently direct discourse that frustrates his interlocutors directly

or passively receiving it. Compare, for example, Socrates' argument from recollection (see *Phaedo* chapter).

⁵ For a discussion on the nature of summoners, see the *Republic* chapter.

⁶ Also, compare Socrates' account of how he went about reinterpreting the meaning of his frequently recurring dream (*Phaedo* 60d+).

REPUBLIC
SUMMONERS AND THE CRAFT OF COMMUNICATION

ABSTRACT..... 23

4.1 CONFLICT AND COMMUNICATION 23

4.2 COMMUNICATION AND TRANSFER 23

4.3 FORM OF VALUE AND FORM OF COMMUNICATION 25

4.4 SHOWING AND CRAFTSPEOPLE 27

4.5 RECEPTIVE REASON AND NON-CONTRADICTION 29

4.6 REASON AND UNITY 31

4.7 RIDICULOUSNESS AND THE METAPHYSICS OF COMMUNICATION 31

4.8 SUMMONERS AND THE CRAFT OF REASON 32

4.9 IMITATORS AND ORIGINATORS 33

NOTES..... 35

ABSTRACT

Plato communicates through dialogues. He thus communicates by showing people communicating. This is not quite right however. For, it turns out that while Plato's works are full of dialogue he shows little successful communication. He thus communicates by showing repeated failures of communication. Plato's work thus manifests a conflict. This conflict is not accidental to his method. Rather, it, along with conflicts like it, forms the basis of Plato's peculiar mode of communication. With these conflicts, Plato gives his cave-dweller audience an appearance with which they cannot rest; he gives them something to transcend.

4.1 CONFLICT AND COMMUNICATION

The *Republic* opens with Socrates describing what befalls him on the road to Athens: after spending the day in Piraeus, Socrates heads towards home. Polemarchus, seeing him in the distance, sends his off his slave in hot pursuit. The slave, catching up, grabs hold of Socrates' cloak, and asks him to wait. In due course, Polemarchus arrives and charges: 'you must either prove stronger than we are, or you will have to stay here.' Socrates points out that he could persuade Polemarchus to let him go. Polemarchus continues: '[b]ut could you persuade us if we don't listen? we won't listen; you'd better make up your mind to that' (1.327c).

Even though Polemarchus jests, he unwittingly identifies a genuine problem. Because people exhibit their way of valuing in the way they communicate, two people with radically different ways of valuing 'won't listen' to, or, more correctly, each will not be able to hear, what the other says. For this reason, it turns out Polemarchus really is deaf to the way Socrates communicates. For he, along with the long list of other interlocutors with whom Plato populates the dialogues, value, and so communicate, in a way that is radically different from the way in which Socrates values and communicates. Socrates' interlocutors essentially speak a language different from the one that Socrates speaks. Even though Socrates is aware of this divide, his interlocutors are not.¹ Accordingly, they implicitly assume he speaks their language; and on that assumption, they invariably misunderstand him.

4.2 COMMUNICATION AND TRANSFER

In the very fact that he possesses a slave, Polemarchus exhibits his way of valuing:² he conceives of value as extrinsic. From this follows his direct mode of communication. For him communication like value concerns only what can be directly transferred and directly received. Thus, with his playful confrontational manner, Polemarchus unwittingly displays the real essence (i.e., an impinging motion from without) of his mode of communication.

Polemarchus invites Socrates back to his father Cephalus' house, where the aging Cephalus enthusiastically greets him and confesses: 'as the physical pleasures wither away, my desire for conversation and its pleasures grows' (1.328d; see also 1.329cd). He goes on to celebrate his geriatric flight from the 'savage and tyrannical master' of his appetites (1.329c). However, no sooner than he strikes up this conversation, and just as Socrates presses him to explain his new understanding of value, Cephalus abandons their concourse to attend to more pressing matters.

Cephalus disappears to tend his sacrifices to the gods (1.331d). However, with his exit he does not so easily escape Socrates' enquiry. For with his departure he shows how he values, and thereby, how he communicates. Like his son, Polemarchus, he has a conception of value and communication that merely involves transfer. Moreover, he assumes that the gods value and communicate in precisely the same way. Thus, while his appetite for 'sex, drinking parties, [and] feasts' has waned, his way of valuing and communicating essentially remains the same. Only the content, not the form, of his way of valuing has changed. For this reason, Socrates fails genuinely to communicate with him.

This pattern of mock communication recurs throughout the remainder of the dialogue. Because communication for Socrates' interlocutors involves a direct transfer, the content of

their communication is essentially external to them. When they speak they merely regurgitate or recite rather than show an understanding. They possess ideas or beliefs as they possess slaves and money.

The way in which they possess their beliefs allows them to effortlessly abandon, or pass on their place in, their conversations; they thus do not genuinely participate in the conversation. Cephalus deserts the conversation to Polemarchus (1.331d). Thrasymachus wrests it from Polemarchus (1.336b). In turn, when Thrasymachus makes his escape, Glaucon is first to renew his argument (2.357a+) and then his brother Adeimantus takes it up (2.362d+).

Plato shows this same kind of easy transfer in other dialogues: in *Gorgias*, for example, Polus takes over the argument from Gorgias; Callicles, in turn, takes it over from Polus (*Gorgias* 461c+, 482d+). In *Euthydemus*, the tag-team sophist brothers fall over each other as they try to pass the arguments back and forth. *Philebus* begins with Protarchus taking over from Philebus (*Philebus* 11a+). Protagoras, in the dialogue of the same name, attempts to escape Socrates' scrutiny by first taking on the voice of others and then by trying to leave the discussion altogether (*Protagoras* 333c, 333e, 338e, 347c-348a).

As they effortlessly pass in and out of conversation, Socrates' interlocutors show their passive possession of ideas. Cephalus, for example, regurgitates Sophocles (1.329c), Themistocles (1.329e) and Pindar (1.331a). Polemarchus regurgitates Simonides (1.331d). Glaucon, professing unbelief (2.358c), regurgitates a defence for Thrasymachus. Adeimantus, to the same end, regurgitates Homer, Hesiod (2.363+), Musaeus (2.363c) and Simonides (2.365bc). Thrasymachus appears to be the one exception. However, in an important respect he treats communication in the same way. For he hurls a speech at them; Socrates compares him with a bath attendant who empties a 'great flood of words into [their] ears' (1.344d, also cf. 1.345b).³

Elsewhere, Socrates' interlocutors communicate in the same way. They merely regurgitate or pass content rather than show an understanding. For example, when Socrates asks Meno for his own views, and asks him to 'leave Gorgias out of it', Meno still merely goes on to regurgitate Gorgias' opinion (*Meno* 71d+). After the same habit, Phaedrus regurgitates Lysias (*Phaedrus* 230e+); Cebes collects arguments (amongst those he regurgitates is a garbled version of one of Socrates' arguments – see *Phaedo* 72d+, 63a+); Euthyphro and Ion regurgitate Homer (see *Euthyphro* 6+; *Ion* 530c+). (Socrates implies that) Protagoras recites Pericles (*Protagoras* 329a).

Plato even has his narrators regurgitate. For example, we hear the story of the *Symposium* as told by Apollodorus who has heard it from Aristodemus (*Symposium* 127c+). Similarly, we hear about the young Socrates' discussion with Parmenides and Zeno from Cephalus who heard it from Antiphon who heard it from Pythodorus (*Parmenides* 126b+). With these displays, Socrates' interlocutors conflate understanding with mere (passive) possession.

With this passive or merely receptive view of the understanding, arguments and fables play essentially the same role. Accordingly, Adeimantus reasons, if the gods exist 'we know about them from the laws and the poets who give their genealogies — nowhere else' (2.365e). He thus assumes that to regurgitate myths is essentially to offer arguments (see 2.363e+, cf. also *Protagoras* 320c+). According to this merely receptive view of the understanding, to judge the veracity of the understanding's contents we must not look to the understanding itself (or the form of its contents), but beyond it, to the source of its contents. Since the poets are inspired, it is enough to trace what is recited back to them.

Socrates' interlocutors' merely receptive use of their understandings has a consequence: when Socrates questions their understandings, he never really questions them. For there is no necessary connection between his interlocutors and the content of their understandings. Thus, Thrasymachus regards Socrates' testing of his arguments as a testing of something essentially external to him (see 1.353e, also 1.338d; 1.341ab; cf. *Euthyphro* 11b+, 15b; *Lesser Hippias* 373b; *Philebus* 12a; also cf. *Symposium* 175d+). In *Protagoras* the same pattern occurs: Protagoras repeatedly looks to hide behind other people's voices. When finally

(just to appease Socrates) he agrees to go along with what Socrates says, Socrates immediately responds:

[d]on't do that to me! It's not this 'if you want' or 'if you agree' business I want to test. It's you and me I want to put on the line, and I think the argument will be tested best if we take the 'if' out. (*Protagoras* 331c; also cf. 333c)

Socrates' interlocutors regurgitate a wall of verbiage. However, this behaviour is not the immediate cause of what separates Socrates from them — the situation is more serious than that. More correctly, their behaviour is what prevents them from gathering themselves as genuine selves. Thus, because of their behaviour, they do not rightly have selves to distance from Socrates.

4.3 FORM OF VALUE AND FORM OF COMMUNICATION

In Book II of the *Republic*, Glaucon and Adeimantus imitate Thrasymachus and defend his view concerning the value of injustice. From Thrasymachus' perspective, value is essentially extrinsic; there is only so much to go around; consequently, people must compete for it. (However, this competition for value does not merely arise because there are not enough objects of value to go around; for under this extrinsic conception, there is no genuine sense in which there could be enough value to go around. There is no sense in which anything is nearer completion upon the acquisition of extrinsic objects of value. Furthermore, competition is not merely a means to the end of acquiring pre-existing objects of value; it also delivers its own extrinsic value. For only through competition can the extrinsic value of victory arise.)

According to Thrasymachus' view, value and justice are more often than not at odds. Thus, the person who is most unjust — the tyrant — possesses most value. Ending their defence of injustice, Glaucon and Adeimantus challenge Socrates to convince them of the opposing position. This challenge however presents a problem. For even though Glaucon and Adeimantus seek to distance themselves from the view that they defend (even as they defend it — see 2.358c, 2.361e, 2.367a), it is nevertheless clear that they are beholden to the same conception of value that Thrasymachus assumes.

(Because Glaucon and Adeimantus assume a passive conception of value, they essentially misconstrue the character of that opposite position. Glaucon challenges Socrates to show that the just person is happier (2.361d). However, for him, happiness ultimately concerns pleasure (see 2.357b, 4.419a). Glaucon thus, throughout the remainder of the discussion, implicitly, and a few times explicitly, demands that Socrates preserve his way of valuing. In due course, as Socrates draws to the end of his account of justice, and after he has explained that the happiness of particular people is not the concern of justice — the eyes of a statue are not to be painted the most beautiful colour (purple), because what is at stake is the beauty of the whole statue and not merely the eyes (4.420cd) — he acquiesces and does a playful conversion for them. He reassures them that the just 'king lives seven hundred and twenty-nine times more pleasantly than the tyrant' (9.587e).)

Glaucon and Adeimantus betray their passive take on value with the way they communicate and by their demand that Socrates also conform to that way. (For, in demanding such a response, they ignore the argument — that is, the showing — that is Socrates.) They assume that Socrates' defence will take the form of a direct transfer. However, it cannot. For a way of valuing is manifested not only in the content but more primarily in the form of communication. Glaucon and Adeimantus do not recognise that an appropriate defence of justice demands a quite opposite mode of communication to their own (else, they would recognise that Socrates already offers such a defence). In fact, their demand that Socrates convince them of the value of justice, essentially begs the question against that very conception. For, from Socrates' perspective, not only the content of Thrasymachus' thesis is askew but so too is his 'bath attendant' manner. If Socrates attempts to directly convince Glaucon and Adeimantus — that is to say, if he tries to impinge on their understanding by directly giving their understandings something rather than inviting their understandings to gather it for themselves (i.e., gather him for themselves) — he will thereby do them an injustice. For this reason, a direct defence of justice will show only injustice. Because Socrates connects value to

the (completion of) form, he cannot communicate his conception in the given content of what he says. That is to say, he cannot directly communicate to others how he understands value.

Because they take value to be extrinsic, Glaucon and Adeimantus are direct communicators. Consequently, they are concerned only with the (given) content of communication rather than its form. They thus expect all communication to be direct and are prepared to recognise only what is direct. That is to say, they expect Socrates to play the bath attendant, and, because of that expectation, they are determined to see him merely in that role. The upshot of this is that they are determined unwittingly to see Socrates express only their own conception of value, not only in the form of his communication, but also, in its content. Because of the direction of this determination, Socrates' interlocutors can only recognise aright the meaning of what he says if they already value in the way in which he communicates. This priority, which subsumes meaning under its determining practices, appears to create a vicious circularity, which counts against the possibility of genuine communication.

In order to invite his interlocutors to think about value in this way (that is to say, in order to have them connect value to practices or form, rather than merely content), Socrates describes a healthy city. In his account he meets that call from Glaucon and Adeimantus for content with a presentation of form and an absence of a particular type of content. He describes a city that lacks those extrinsic objects that Glaucon and Adeimantus recognise as bearing value. Thus, this absence of the objects of value in the elements of the supposedly healthy city should summon them to think about value in a different way. Socrates invites them to think of value attaching to form rather than merely content (see 2.369ab, 2.372ab). In this respect, consider the place of value in Socrates' image of the cave: 'the form of the good is the last thing to be seen' (7.517b), for value is conveyed only in what is appreciated as complete.

However, retaining his merely receptive use of the understanding, Glaucon cannot recognise that Socrates has presented a form (2.372a) — an understanding must be active to recognise such manifest necessity. Glaucon focuses merely on the constitutive elements of the city, and consequently, he only sees an absence of value. He insists that Socrates refashion the economy to include objects of value: 'couches, tables, and other furniture ... perfumed oils, incense, prostitutes, and pastries' (2.372d; 2.373a). Here, rather than blaming himself for not recognising value, Glaucon effectively blames Socrates for not providing value.

With his stipulation concerning the nature of value, Glaucon unwittingly replaces the unity of value manifest in the form of the city with a multiplicity of value to be found in its content. He thus unwittingly sabotages Socrates' account. Socrates goes on to describe a city in fever (2.372e-2.373a). In introducing objects of value into the city, Glaucon immediately introduces the spirit of competition and the threat of war (2.373de).

Socrates goes on to augment quite radically the form of the city to accommodate what Glaucon stipulates. He creates completely new crafts, along with their training programs, which far outstrips the regimen of the crafts present in the simpler, healthy, city. These additional crafts are needed, because, in the feverish city, there is a greater deficit. (This deficit, or need, the activity of crafts must meet.) Throughout this subsequent account, Socrates tries to limit the influence of Glaucon's objects of value and thereby subtly alter Glaucon's understanding of value. For example, Socrates makes a distinction between divine gold etc. and human gold etc. He asserts that the guardians have the divine gold and silver in their soul and so they have no need of the human variety (3.416de). Here Socrates appropriates Glaucon's objects of value and transforms them: he makes them, in this case non-transferable, or intrinsic, rather than extrinsic. Socrates thus transforms Glaucon's objects of value into subjects of value (see *Euthyphro* chapter).

However, in the end, this program fails and Socrates admits it. According to his description of those additional crafts needed by the feverish city, it is clear that such a city needs a Socrates. However, even Socrates is not enough. The meritocracy of this refashioned state, Socrates suggests, will inevitably disintegrate into a timarchy, in which the 'victory-loving and honor-loving' rule (8.545a). In turn, the timarchy will descend into an oligarchical state where only the rich will rule (8.550c). In due course the oligarchy will reduce itself into a democratic state (in which everyone has a chance to rule), and that, finally will decay into a

tyranny. Detailing this inexorable descent, Socrates arrives back to their starting point: Thrasymachus' take on value. The feverish city thus fails to escape the consequences of the tyrant's passive way of valuing. Socrates thus implicitly warns: introducing multiplicity in place of the unity and singularity of value invites an inevitable descent into ever compounded multiplicity (8.545a+). Here, Socrates indicates doubleness to this failure. For in this admission, he nods to his own failure to usurp Glaucon and Adeimantus' take on value. They have considered a city in fever: one that shows the origins of injustice rather than justice (cf. 2.372e+).

Apart from *Phaedrus*, the *Republic* is the only dialogue that places Socrates beyond the city walls. He is only a stone's throw away in the port city of Pireaus. In a sense, he is in a place conceptually beyond his idealisation of Athens, for he is in a place that represents what is gratuitous to the ideal city. The port city of Pireaus represents a conception of value that involves exchange or trade. It is thus a conception that focuses on content rather than form. This misunderstanding of value Socrates tries to banish from his ideal city. However, the inhabitants of Pireaus insist on its inclusion and their insistence brings about the destruction of that ideal city.

4.4 SHOWING AND CRAFTSPEOPLE

The way his interlocutors communicate clearly threatens the possibility of Socrates genuinely communicating with them. Glaucon and Adeimantus' inability to recognise Socrates' conception of value implicitly and at times explicitly dogs the entire discussion. Their blindness to what Socrates seeks to communicate is most explicit the few times they question him (see e.g., 3.392c, 4.419a, 5.449c, 7.519d, 7.532d). The nature of these few disagreements reveal how unchecked Glaucon and Adeimantus' initial conception of value is. Thus, that apparent agreement marked by the almost unstinting flow of their yeses denotes no real agreement at all.

Furthermore, Glaucon and Adeimantus repeatedly agree with things that they are in no real position to judge and if they were rightly gathering the meaning of Socrates' account they would realise that he was telling them that they are in no real position to judge. For example, according to Socrates, the feverish city will have to institute an arduous and extended educational regime for its prospective rulers. These rulers, he suggests, will be like doctors who administer drugs to the diseased city. In telling this story, Socrates also plays the doctor. Concerning these doctor-rulers, Socrates repeatedly suggests, they will have to use falsehoods as a kind of a drug (see 2.382c, 3.389b, 3.414b+, 5.459cd). Glaucon and Adeimantus agree. Their agreement, however, does nothing to acknowledge how engrossing Socrates' meaning is of their own situation. That is to say, they fail to receive what Socrates says as genuine communication. They fail to recognise his communication as something that involves, or threatens (i.e., summons), their own understandings. Rather, they receive it as if they were mere containers.

Glaucon and Adeimantus thus do not place themselves in this story; they are unaware that only those who have successfully completed the requirements of that education program are in a position to rightly judge how the city-state should be arranged. Because Glaucon and Adeimantus have not benefited from such practices, their cascading yeses do not mark the success and completion of such an education. Socrates fails genuinely to communicate with them. This problem of communication (that is, the problem of people only hearing what they expect to hear or hearing only what their way of valuing determines them to hear) looks intractable. However, Plato refuses to 'make up [his] mind to that' (cf. 1.327c).

Socrates cannot communicate anything genuinely new to his interlocutors as long as they assume that he communicates directly. That is to say, he cannot communicate with them as long as they maintain their way of valuing. This problem arises for Socrates because his interlocutors do not recognise that he is showing them something rather than merely telling them something. That is to say, Socrates' interlocutors do not recognise that what it is to communicate, to understand, and to value involves a practice or a form rather than merely a receipt. The problem therefore arises not so much because Socrates' interlocutors value and so

communicate in a way different from the way in which he values, but rather because they completely fail genuinely to value and communicate. (Consequently, Socrates' interlocutors not only have problems communicating with Socrates, they also have problems communicating with themselves. Consider Meno's debater's argument: Meno rhetorically asks: '[h]ow will you aim to search for something you do not know at all? If you should meet with it, how will you know that this is the thing that you did not know?' (*Meno* 80d). Without hesitation, Meno concludes that genuine learning is not possible (*Meno* 81a). Meno's implicit assumption, that communication can only be direct (see his opening question of the dialogue – *Meno* 70a) inexorably leads to the conclusion he cannot even communicate with himself.)

With his familiar claim that he knows nothing (see 1.337e, *Meno* 71b), Socrates warns his listeners against expecting mere content. That is to say, he warns that he has nothing to communicate directly. Nevertheless, he endeavours to communicate indirectly a form for their understandings. Socrates, it turns out, is an odd kind of craftspeople. With the dialogues, Plato shows him practising his craft; and that showing, as there is with all showing, invites participation.

Throughout his many conversations, Socrates repeatedly discusses the activity of craftspeople. With these repeated appeals, he shows his affinity with those practical workers. Moreover, without fail, he frustrates his interlocutors with this kind of talk. Callicles gives voice to a feeling that most of Socrates' interlocutors will share. Exasperated, he rebukes Socrates:

[b]y the gods! You simply don't let up on your continual talk of shoemakers and cleaners, cooks and doctors, as if our discussion were about them! (*Gorgias* 491a)

Callicles' outburst is revealing. For within it he conflates what he should keep separate. Socrates' continual talk is really of shoemakers and doctors and not of cleaners and cooks. With his outburst, Callicles shows that he does not appreciate what defines crafts and so he does not understand Socrates' preoccupation with them. Further, with his conflation he belittles those practical activities. Callicles, like other sophists, sees himself above such mundane and practical concerns; this conceit is precisely the ground of his problem.

On occasions it may appear that Socrates also attacks craftspeople. For example, he rebukes them in the *Apology* for their conceit of knowledge. However, here, as elsewhere, Socrates only criticises them insofar as he gauges their talk to extend beyond their practices or beyond their showing (see *Apology* 22d).⁴ That is to say, he only rebukes them insofar as they show themselves not to be craftspeople. As long as the communication of craftspeople does not extend beyond their practices, they not only genuinely communicate but they also manifest something of Socrates' conception of knowledge and value.

According to Socrates, craftspeople get something right that his interlocutors invariably get wrong. For unlike his interlocutors, craftspeople communicate primarily through a showing (that is, they communicate through the form of their activity) rather than a telling (see 5.466e+). They can only communicate in this way because their activity has a definite form and a definite end. Concerning craftspeople Socrates observes:

see how each one places what he does into a certain organization, and compels one thing to be suited for another and to fit to it until the entire object is put together in an organized and orderly way. (*Gorgias* 503e-504a; also see *Republic* 1.342ab)

Because craftspeople have something to complete or perfect, there is for them a thoroughgoing connection between practice and value (see 1.341d, 2.369a, 2.371e, 3.406d); their practices determine how they value. Thus, with their practices they define or manifest value. Moreover, the objects of crafts address human needs or deficiencies (it is knacks rather than crafts that make people more deficient – see *Gorgias* 462c+); thus, the crafts together, aim to make a self-sufficient whole (see 2.369b). There is thus something divine about the form of the ultimate end of the combined activity of the crafts.

Socrates attempts to infuse his account of the perfect state with the craftspeople's form of life, with its singularity of value. In that perfect city, every person's 'way of life ... must be

in common' (8.543a). With this practical foundation follows an agreement in the way people value. Craftspeople qua craftspeople thus solve the problem of communication.

Concerning the form of communication in the ideal city Socrates states:

the true lawgiver oughtn't to bother with that form of law of constitution [which impinges from without], either in a badly governed city or in a well-governed one — in the former, because it is useless and accomplishes nothing; in the latter, because anyone could discover some of these things, while the others follow automatically from the forms of life we establish. (4.427a)

Direct communication in the hands of a legislator is of no use. For, with it a legislator cannot successfully impose a law on an understanding bereft of that law. There is no way to convert regulative principles into constitutive ones merely through a telling or an impinging from without. Only a practice can inculcate such principles to make them the constitutive form rather than merely regulative elements of the understanding. In the case where such lawfulness already constitutes an understanding, such regulative principles are gratuitous (and so antithetical to the economical form of that constitution).

Socrates ends his *Republic* narrative with the myth of Er (see 10.614b+). With this story of the afterlife, Socrates re-emphasises the connection between practice and value. The story goes: Er, after dying on the battle field, and after lying dead for twelve days, springs back into life to report to others what will befall them in the world beyond. In reality, he reports to them what befalls them in this world.

He explains that the dead are brought before Lachesis, one of the three daughters of Necessity, who sings of the past, and who sits on one of three thrones that face the lap of Necessity upon which the spindle of Necessity turns. Here, the dead must choose their next life from a number of models, which are taken from the lap of Lachesis the daughter of Necessity (10.617d). However, in a sense, there is no real choice here, only Necessity. For, with their previous way of life the dead have essentially already made that choice. For, Er observes, the choice 'depended upon the character of their former life' (10.620a). In other words, the form of people's lives determine both how they value, and what they will recognise as valuable (see 1.330c). This necessity arises because value is not a given. (This is not to say that value is relative. Rather, this is merely to say that as long as an understanding is merely receptive, value will appear to it as relative. Once an understanding attaches value to activity — that is to say, once an understanding becomes active — then it recognises value only in that necessity manifested in completed form.) Er ends by reporting: 'the arrangement of the soul was not included in the model because the soul is inevitably altered by the different lives it chooses' (10.618b).

Socrates' interlocutors have no feeling for necessity. For their lives do not involve practices. According to this order, Glaucon and Adeimantus' lives determine what they recognise in Socrates; and because of this, they are bound to misunderstand him. Socrates' interlocutors are not craftspeople. They are talkers rather than practitioners:⁵ they are sophists, students of sophists, poets, orators, rhetorians and rhapsodes.

With his repeated appeals to genuine practitioners like cobblers, Socrates repeatedly silences his loquacious counterparts. Initially at least, they have much to say. However, as these encounters progress, Socrates quiets them.⁶ He brings this about by essentially demanding that they show him something with their telling. Because they have no practices to show, they eventually discover that they have nothing to say.

4.5 RECEPTIVE REASON AND NON-CONTRADICTION

Because sophists and their ilk are so removed from practices, they have no idea what might constitute a practice. They are thus not in a position to recognise what Socrates does. Consequently, they cannot rightly gather his meaning. In his hierarchy of degrees of being, Socrates ranks sophists beneath manual labours and just above tyrants, who are furthest removed from manifesting the self-motion of the divine (see *Phaedrus* 248de). Accordingly, because of their lack of practices, sophists make their students more like brutes than like gods. For when they get communication wrong they also miscommunicate what it is to reason.

Protagoras, for example, claims to teach his students 'sound deliberation' (*Protagoras* 319a). However, as a direct communicator he cannot achieve this end, for, such teaching cannot show a practice for reason (see *Protagoras* chapter). Rather, it can only show reason outwardly directed; and showing reason merely expressing an outward movement, Protagoras can show nothing complete — that is to say, with his form of direct communication he cannot show reason manifesting self-motion. He shows merely an extrinsic application of reason rather than showing it defining a self (i.e., a unity).

Socrates, describing the robust resistance of healthy reason and the mark of its diseased counterpart, states:

the same thing will not be willing to do or undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time. So, if we ever find this happening in the soul, we'll know that we aren't dealing with one thing but many. (4.436bc)

When reason is acting aright, this resistant force (this refusal to deny itself) is a by-product of its positive or unifying activity. Socrates shows us this positive resistance in his many discussions with his interlocutors; his reason refuses to receive a contradiction from them. When they appear to contradict themselves he claims that he does not understand.

The opposite order obtains when his interlocutors apply their reason. They search for, or look to secure, contradictions in others. Consider, for example, the tag-team sophist brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus: with a nimble and ambiguous use of language they seek to turn others on themselves (see *Euthydemus*). Even though the brothers are caricatures, with them Plato nonetheless identifies the pathology present in their more earnest counterparts. When Protagoras, for example, considers Simonides, he all too quickly latches on to the appearance of conflict. Finding this appearance, his reason rests content with the contradiction (see *Protagoras* chapter).

Socrates shows his interlocutors that they search for contradictions where they ought not; he shows that they misapply reason; for, they direct its focus without. In this way, rather than showing reason completing something, they only show reason residing with incompleteness. Consequently, it is not, the understandings of others that are conflicted; rather, it is really their own understandings that contain that conflict. As long as they continue to direct their reason without, they can never reach a genuine understanding. Socrates' interlocutors thus fail to commit their reason to understanding.

Understanding, Socrates shows, requires the positive or unifying practice of reason; reason must recognise (or work together a) singularity rather than receive multiplicity. The 'useless and harmful' way in which Socrates' interlocutors turn their reason ends with them being 'filled with lawlessness' (7.518e, 7.537e). Socrates describes the behaviour that betrays this turning out of reason:

[t]hey misuse [reason] by treating it as a game of contradiction. They imitate those who've refuted them by refuting others themselves, and like puppies, they enjoy dragging and tearing those around them with arguments. (7.539b)

Socrates' interlocutors repeatedly accuse him of cheaply applying this same tactic. Thrasymachus, for example, charges: '[y]ou disgust me Socrates. Your trick is to take hold of the argument at the point you can do it most harm' (1.338d, also see 1.340d). In *Gorgias*, Calicles, in the same vain, accuses Socrates of loving to win (*Gorgias* 515b). However, these are merely examples of his interlocutors only recognising their own way of valuing in what Socrates does. They thus project something of their own way onto Socrates.

This passivity, and its accompanying mark of multiplicity, is just as apparent when Socrates' interlocutors move from criticising others to offering their own explanation for things. Consider Euthyphro's justification for prosecuting his father (see *Euthyphro* 5d+), or Thrasymachus', Glaucon's, or Adeimantus' justification for injustice (see *Republic* Books I and II). In their attempts to tell stories that are merely self-consistent, Socrates' interlocutors are unable even to achieve that end. For passively applying the law of non-contradiction offers no guarantee of producing something coherent and its merely negative review is nowhere near

sufficient to identify something that manifests necessity. For without a positive or unifying activity, reason is not only blind to necessity, it is also blind to genuine consistency. Consider the incoherent jumble that Socrates' interlocutors, and, for the most part, the poets, produce whenever they talk of gods and value. If Socrates' interlocutors want to tell self-consistent stories about value, justice and the gods then they must first possess adequate understandings of the necessary form of these things. Else, they cannot rightly judge what they can consistently assert of them. However, because they use their understandings merely as receptacles, they have not gathered such an understanding. They merely import something quite arbitrary into their understandings (see 2.365e). Because they are only concerned with given content, and not with form, they wrongly suppose that it is an easy matter to speak consistently.

4.6 REASON AND UNITY

In contrast to his interlocutors, throughout the dialogues Socrates does not look merely for consistency but for necessity. Because of this, rather than showing merely a negative use of reason he shows its positive activity (i.e., he shows a practice for reason). Socrates shows something complete. In his *Republic* discussion of education, he maintains: 'those whom we are rearing should never try to learn anything incomplete' (7.350e). For, without this condition, education is merely indoctrination. Education, Socrates asserts, is not a matter of 'putting knowledge into souls that lack it' (7.518b). Thus, when he insists that children should never learn anything incomplete, he signals that education should concern itself only with practices.

According to the *Republic's* educational regimen, at age of twenty the prospective rulers are to be given their greatest and most decisive challenge: they are instructed to unify everything they know (7.537cd).⁷ At this point they already implicitly know what it is to unify. For, their previous education has introduced them to works that exhibit unity of form. Furthermore, throughout their education they also engage in playful practices, the end of which is unity (7.536e, 8.558b). They thus, already know the form of activity that they must accomplish. They have essentially been educated to have an aesthetic appreciation for what is complete (3.401d+). Lawfulness has been inculcated into reason and is thus constitutive of the understanding. This form, or lawfulness, is not something that regulates the understanding from without (as might the law of non-contradiction).

With his account of the training of the prospective rulers, Socrates describes an apprenticeship for reason, which will, if successfully followed, produce a craft for reason. Glaucon and company sit by and readily agree that this is the way education must go. However, if Socrates' account is correct then they will be in a position to recognise the 'must' in question only upon having successfully completed that same rigorous practical apprenticeship. This they have not done. Thus, there is something hollow about their assent.

Socrates cannot invite his passive interlocutors to start unifying their understandings merely by telling them a story that manifests unity. For, in speaking with them, he is essentially addressing cave dwellers whose heads are still motionless (see 7.514a+). At most, they will passively receive the story as non-contradictory; they do not thereby gather his meaning. They will not know how to unify merely because someone tells them that this is what they must do. (The prospective rulers only know how to unify because of the form of their education.)

4.7 RIDICULOUSNESS AND THE METAPHYSICS OF COMMUNICATION

As Socrates completes his image of the cave, he obliquely refers to his own (and Plato's) method of communication. That method promises to solve the impasse he faces with his interlocutors. According to that image, the person who escapes the confinement of the cave, who has turned his head around (from its extrinsic use of reason to the self-motion of its unifying activity), and who thus manifests and thereby recognises the form of value, will appear ridiculous to those 'perpetual prisoners' when he returns to the cave and tries to communicate with them. This appearance of ridiculousness promises to solve the apparently intractable problem of communication.

This appearance partly results from the peculiar way in which Socrates values. He goes after none of the trappings that are most highly prized by his fellow Athenians. Furthermore, while he uses the same language as that used by his fellows he insists upon

speaking of things such as cobbling, of which his educated interlocutors have no interest. However, this appearance of ridiculousness does not fully account for what comes next in his account. Immediately after suggesting that the philosopher will appear ridiculous, Socrates, referring to the shackled prisoners, adds: '[a]nd ... if they could get their hands on him, wouldn't they kill him?' (7.517a). — Glaucon (again without recognising his own place in the picture and so without feeling genuine malice) answers: '[t]hey certainly would.'

What heralds the cave dwellers' bloodthirsty response?

Consider the ridiculous antics of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus (see, e.g., *Euthydemus* 298b+). The tag-team brothers pose no real threat to anyone. They are merely comical: they aim at cleverness and fall short. Consequently, no one considers them much of a threat. Euthydemus and Dionysodorus thus do not manifest the kind of ridiculousness that Socrates presents. They are comical because they are transparent. That is to say, they do not merely appear ridiculous; they are ridiculous.

Protagoras tries to make Simonides out to be just as ridiculous. However, he is only able to do this because Simonides is absent. Socrates steps into Simonides' shoes, and suddenly Protagoras is ridiculous. Here, Socrates shows Protagoras something: in order not to be ridiculous (or, more simply, in order just to be), he must transcend what merely appears to be ridiculous. In this way, Socrates challenges Protagoras to unify what appears to be multitudinous (see *Protagoras* chapter).

Thus, just as the simpleton conversation of the Spartans is a front, which hides something quite opposite (see *Protagoras* 342e), so, Socrates' ridiculousness is part of a 'big game' (see *Symposium* 216e). Consequently, Socrates' ridiculousness does not threaten to humiliate him; it rather threatens only to humiliate others — even his closest friends. Alcibiades admits that Socrates has humiliated him (*Symposium* 219d). He describes Socrates as 'impudent, contemptuous and vile!' (*Symposium* 215b) and, wearing the hat of a cave dweller, he confesses: at times, I have thought that 'I would be happier if he were dead' (*Symposium* 216c). However, there is something else to Socrates. Alcibiades continues: '[i]f you listen to his arguments, at first they'd strike you as totally ridiculous If you're foolish, or simply unfamiliar with him, you'd find it impossible not to laugh at his arguments' (*Symposium* 221e). Alcibiades concludes that Socrates is 'godlike' (*Symposium* 217a).

4.8 SUMMONERS AND THE CRAFT OF REASON

On the heels of the image of the cave, Socrates makes a distinction with which he effectively differentiates himself from the likes of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. He says:

some sense perceptions *don't* summon the understanding to look into them, because the judgment of sense perception is itself adequate, while others encourage it in every way to look into them, because sense perception seems to produce no sound result. (7.523ab)

True to form, Glaucon misunderstands. He supposes that Socrates refers to the kinds of appearance such as that worked in '*trompe l'oeil*' paintings' (7.523b). Here Glaucon thinks of those knacks that merely trick the understanding. Thus, he merely identifies the kind of deception used by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus (see 10.602c+).

However, when Socrates refers to summoners, he speaks of something that really does summon the understanding. He points to something singular but having the appearance of multiplicity. Thus, he does not speak of the likes of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. For even though they contradict themselves, they in no way tempt their audience to unify that apparent multiplicity. There is no singularity lurking behind their complexity. Their appearance sufficiently explains them.

Socrates continues:

[t]he ones that don't summon the understanding are all those that don't go off into opposite perceptions at the same time. But the ones that do go off in that way I call *summoners* — whenever sense perception does not declare one thing more than its opposite, no matter whether the object striking the senses is near at hand or far away. (7.523bc)

Here Socrates refers to himself and his own ridiculous appearance. Consider, for example, what Socrates does in the *Apology*. Accused of teaching and thereby corrupting the youth of Athens, Socrates defends himself by first claiming not to be a teacher and then by claiming to teach the jury. Furthermore, responding to Meletus' additional charge of blasphemy, Socrates denies his guilt by explaining how he questioned the judgement of the Oracle at Delphi. At that trial, he also criticises the poets for being inspired and so writing without understanding. He goes on to claim that he knows nothing but he also claims to have a direct connection to the divine (see *Apology* chapter).

Plato repeats this same pattern throughout the dialogues and extends Socrates' method to engulf himself as author of the dialogues. Thus, he has Socrates attack both imitative narrative (see e.g., 10.595a) and those people who never show themselves, preferring to hide behind the voices of others (see, e.g. *Protagoras* 331c). At the close of *Phaedrus*, he has Socrates attack writers. He suggests: 'if ... anybody ... ever did or does write ... a political document which he believes to embody clear knowledge of lasting importance, then the writer deserves reproach, whether anyone says so or not' (*Phaedrus* 277d). In *Protagoras*, he has Socrates attack those who discuss poets (presumably, we, as readers of the dialogues, are targets); he compares them to 'second-rate drinking parties' (*Protagoras* 347c+).

Summoners are both the key to Socrates' peculiar mode of communication and the source of him appearing ridiculous. With them, he catches his interlocutors' attention and so too their hungry pursuit of (extrinsic) value. For with their passive or extrinsic use of reason, Socrates' interlocutors spy in him a contradiction, and with that recognition they sense their victory over him. However, they get to know that if they follow this familiar (extrinsic) course, only their own humiliation awaits them. Thus, when they spy that contradiction in Socrates rather than laughing at him, their understanding (for its own good) is forced to try to transcend that appearance. Socrates thus indirectly bullies them into rescuing him from the appearance of ridiculousness, else they will be found to be ridiculous themselves. Thus, through attracting their extrinsic use of reason he forces their understandings to engage in the opposite, unifying, direction. He compels them to stand up and turn their heads, and to begin to see something of themselves (see 7.515c, 7.515a). Thereupon they enter into a competition, but not an extrinsic one (with Socrates as foe), but one merely with their own understandings. The task: to rescue themselves from that received contradiction — that is, to rescue themselves from the multiplicity of non-being. If they are victorious (that is to say, if they work a unity out of that appearance of multiplicity — see *Gorgias* 503e-504a), they introduce to themselves a new conception of value, a conception where there are winners and no losers. Through such a showing, Socrates thereby initiates others into that practice. Plato's *Apology* is thus tragic because in it Plato shows Socrates' fellow Athenians choosing to eliminate him rather than confront this challenge presented by his ridiculous appearance. Here, Plato presents non-being's tragic resistance to being.

4.9 IMITATORS AND ORIGINATORS

The key to Socrates' form of communication is to be found in the connection between philosophy and poetry. In Book X of the *Republic* Socrates refers to 'an ancient quarrel between [poetry] and philosophy' (10.607b); and in that same work Socrates seems to do his part to intensify that quarrel into an all out war. The victor appears to be philosophy. For, according to Socrates, (philosophers') arguments compel him completely to ban imitative poetry from the proposed state. However, that might not be the final word. For it seems that an imitative poet (Plato) records this supposed victory. Thus, Plato seems to preserve the warring factions, one in the form and the other in the content of that work.

In Book III, in the prelude to that ban, Socrates differentiates simple and imitative narrative. With simple narrative, he suggests, poets never hide themselves. Consequently, they maintain a distance from the events they describe. In contrast, imitative poets take on the voice (and style) of each of their characters (3.392d+). Thus, with this technique, poets do not merely tell their audience about the drama, they show them the drama. In doing so, such poets, according to their talent, draw their audiences imaginatively into the story. The audience

therefore does not merely hear second hand about the struggles, sufferings and triumphs of the characters; they witness them first hand. This has a powerful effect. The audience, in effect also participate; along with the poet, they are drawn to imaginatively engage with the characters. They thus, for a brief time, essentially participate in that way of behaving and accordingly they take on the concerns and so values of those characters. If forms of life determine ways of valuing then imitative narrative is a means to introduce to an audience other ways of valuing.

To show the difference between the simple and the imitative narrative styles, Socrates transforms a tract from Homer from its original imitative voices into its simple narrative equivalent:

[a]nd the priest came and prayed that the gods would allow them to capture Troy and be safe afterwards, that they'd accept the ransom and free his daughter, and thus show reverence for the god. When he'd said this, the others showed their respect for the priest and consented. But Agamemnon was angry and ordered him to leave and never to return, lest his priestly wand and the wreaths of the god should fail to protect him. He said that, before freeing the daughter, he'd grow old in Argos by her side. He told Chryses to go away and not make him angry, if he wanted to get home safely. When the old man heard this, he was frightened and went off in silence. But when he'd left the camp he prayed at length to Apollo, calling him by his various titles and reminding him of all his services to him. If any of those services had been found pleasing, whether it was the building of the temples or the sacrifice of victims, he asked in return that the arrows of the god should make the Achaeans pay for his tears (3.393d-394a).

Even though in this matter of fact retelling of events Socrates seems to preserve the content of Homer's narrative, he does not preserve its original meaning. For, in transforming its form, he also transforms the meaning of its content. The narrative no longer carries us into the action. We do not participate and so do not take on the concerns of those characters (cf. 3.387e). Socrates quite intentionally removes the life from the piece. He essentially creates a form appropriate to its content (cf. 10.601ab).

With this single demonstration, Socrates shows how form determines meaning. What adds to the power of this display is the formal context that Plato fashions for it. For, this section of simple narrative appears within the imitative narrative of the *Republic*. The resulting contrast is stark. Socrates' reworking of the text not only leaves it lifeless in comparison to Homer's original imitative effort, but, more immediately, it is lifeless in comparison to the rest of the dialogue (and, perhaps also, in comparison to everything else in Plato's imitative corpus). Plato reinforces this contrast by having Socrates attack imitative narrative and champion in its place simple narrative.

Thus, even though Socrates rallies behind simple narrative, he thereby indirectly reveals and emphasises the genuine power of the imitative form. Consequently, it may appear that Plato does not really do much to settle the battle. Rather he allows it to continue to wage between the form and content of his work. From this perspective, Plato's form of communication seems to win out over Socrates' content.

However, such a conclusion is unsatisfactory. For, if (as Plato shows throughout the *Republic* and his other dialogues) form determines the meaning of content, then we could not have arrived at the above conflict having followed this determination. In fact, that supposed conflict arises because of determination of meaning in the opposite direction. That is to say, we see the conflict because we allow the given content of Plato's dialogue to determine how we view its form. We apply Socrates' distinction between simple and imitative narrative, to Plato, instead of allowing Plato's form of communication to determine our understanding of that taxonomy of narrative styles. In doing so, we essentially beg the question against the form of Plato's authorship.

With this critique, Plato is concerned with imitation that lacks a genuine practice. That is to say, the type that merely receives and replicates, regurgitates or mirrors what is before it

(10.596d). With this form of imitation, Socrates' interlocutors hide themselves behind other voices. Such behaviour does not constitute a craft. In this sense, we should not receive Plato as imitative. Even though we never directly hear Plato's voice anywhere in his dialogues, we beg the question against the nature of his authorship if we conclude that he thereby imitates and so hides himself.

In that final book of *The Republic*, Socrates differentiates between two types of imitation; the imitation involved in crafts and the imitation that does not involve a craft. For example, the carpenter who makes a bed is an imitator. For, the object of his endeavour is in some sense given to him, for, the carpenter qua carpenter does not judge the adequacy of the bed, rather the end user does (see 10.601c-602a). Painters and imitative poets perform a different type of imitation. They imitate craftspeople or the objects of crafts but unlike those whom they imitate, they do not have end users to define a purpose for their production. Consequently they aim at mere pleasure.

One category of craftspeople remains: namely, those who are non-imitators. In other words, craftspeople who do not follow a determination from without, but, who nevertheless have the same ultimate aim that is implicit in all other craft. These craftspeople are genuinely inventive. They are gods. Their craft concerns the form of reason, which cannot accommodate any imitation (cf 10.603a).⁸ Here the craftsperson is not an imitator but a god (cf. 10.597b+); for, there is something self-directed about the positive use of reason.

Thus, it turns out that Plato does not seek to continue that ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry. He means to resolve that quarrel by conflating the forms of philosophy and poetry. He accomplishes this by removing the imitation from poetry (so that it concerns the feeling of reason rather than those of emotion – see 10.604de) and by removing the direct delivery from philosophy. Plato is a poet of reason. That craft has its analogue in the activity of the reader; with it Plato summons his readers not to be second rate drinking parties (see *Protagoras*).

NOTES

- ¹ Compare, for example, how Socrates begins his *Apology* speech. He quite explicitly warns the jury that he speaks in a different language to them (*Apology* 17cd).
- ² Throughout the dialogues, Plato uses slaves to denote an extrinsic conception of value (see *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, *Symposium* 219e, *Lysis* 207e, *Protagoras* 310c, 352bc, 347bc).
- ³ Only because he thinks that both teaching and communicating essentially involve direct transfer, does Thrasymachus think himself able to demand a reciprocal exchange of value — a fee — for his teaching (see 1.337d; also cf. *Protagoras* in this respect — *Protagoras* 310d, 349a).
- ⁴ In places in the *Republic*, Socrates also criticises the manual crafts (cf. 6.495d, 7.522b). However, once again this is a qualified attack and not an attack on craftspeople per se. In the final book of the *Republic*, Socrates adds a single reservation to his positive assessment of at least some craftspeople. He suggests that they are imitators rather than gods (10.595+). However, he does not suggest that all craftspeople are imitators. And in the sense that craftspeople are imitators their imitation is a necessary part of their practices. They are imitators in the sense that their end has been given to them by the users of the objects of their craft (10.601c). But this leaves a craft that is both the creator and user of what it works. The craft, which concerns the form of reason, cannot accommodate any imitation (cf. 10.603a). Here the craftsperson is not an imitator but a god (cf. 10.597b+). The ideal state's rulers are, according to his conception, craftspeople.
- ⁵ Gorgias, for example, claims that he is able to answer any question put to him (*Gorgias* 447e-448a). Socrates describes Prodicus as 'godlike in his universal knowledge. However, his voice is so deep that it set up a reverberation in the room that blurred what was being said' (*Protagoras* 316a). *Protagoras* claims to be superior to others in verbal contests (*Protagoras* 335a). Socrates compares sophists like *Protagoras* to 'bronze bowls that keep

ringing along time after they have been struck and prolong the sound indefinitely unless you dampen them down' (*Protagoras* 329ab). Another interlocutor, Ion, wins first prize in a competition for those who recite the poets (*Ion* 530b).

⁶ Thrasymachus, for example, after hurling himself at Socrates in Book I of the *Republic* he is reduced to silence by the end of that book and we only hear from him once (5.450a+) in the remaining nine books.

⁷ This is essentially the challenge Plato shows Parmenides issuing to the young Socrates (see *Parmenides*).

⁸ Throughout the dialogues, Plato shows that reason cannot be imitated. He shows that if such an imitation is attempted, something comical or genuinely ridiculous results. Thus, Euthyphro, at times, repeats certain theses that come out of the mouth of Socrates. However, in doing so, his receptive or passive understanding strips those utterances of their intrinsic meaning and something incoherent results. Euthyphro ends up contradicting himself and faces a dilemma (see *Euthyphro* chapter). Euthydemus and Dionysodorus also seem to repeat a number of theses we may wish also to attribute to Socrates. However, coming out of their mouths those ideas are quite incoherent (see *Euthydemus*). Cebes remembers Socrates' argument from recollection and in doing so associates recollection with memory. Like Euthyphro, Cebes transforms what is intrinsic into what is merely extrinsic and so incoherent (see *Phaedo* chapter). Again, consider how Cephalus merely memorises Socrates' conversation with Zeno and Parmenides (see *Parmenides*).

PHAEDO
FABLES AND ARGUMENTS

ABSTRACT38

5.1 CHANGELESSNESS AND SELF-MOTION38

5.2 ACTIVE REALITY AND PASSIVE APPEARANCES39

5.3 CONTAINING KNOWLEDGE AND MANIFESTING KNOWLEDGE39

5.4 REMEMBERING AND RECOLLECTING40

5.5 THE MOTION OF MISOLOGY AND MISANTHROPY
AND THE UNASSAILABLE AGGREGATION OF CONTENT42

5.6 FABLES AND ARGUMENTS43

NOTES44

ABSTRACT

Beauty and being share a form; convictions and fables similarly manifest something completed. The form of such wholes cannot be anticipated from a mere receipt of their given parts. The upshot of this is that we cannot directly discuss these forms. If we attempt to, we immediately convert what is essential to them into something quite gratuitous and as such antithetical to the necessary economy of their completed natures. With this annihilation of form, we facilitate an aggregation or dispersion of content. Consequently, if we embark upon such a discursive procedure, while we may think we speak of beauty, for example, we really speak of a multitude of things with quite opposite natures. In doing this, we are like an Anaxagorean figure, who tries to give an account of why Socrates sits in that prison cell awaiting execution by describing the relative position of Socrates' bones (see 98cd).

Socrates is happy to refer to Beauty, or those things that are beautiful; however, he refuses to offer any analysis. He confesses that he does not understand such talk (100c+). Socrates does not tell us how to understand; he shows us. He manifests what it is to understand. With his relative silence and showing, Socrates essentially asserts that direct talk is antithetical to the necessary form of an understanding. For, in order for an understanding to appreciate beauty, that understanding must also share the irreducible form of beauty. Thus, because Socrates manifests beauty, he refuses to analyse it. Attempting the latter destroys the former: talk aggregates.

However, his friends demand that he talk. Socrates' solution to this predicament is radical: he transforms arguments into the form of fables. With this transformation, apparently weak arguments become strong. For, with his talk, he shows rather than (directly) tells something.

5.1 CHANGELESSNESS AND SELF-MOTION

Phaedo counts as the final chapter in Plato's epic tale. It traverses Socrates' last day, and it ends with his death. In other dialogues, we learn that throughout his life, Socrates never really leaves Athens (see *Phaedrus* 230d); *Crito* shows how Socrates chooses to die there, rather than continue to live elsewhere. In the *Apology*, Socrates claims that his connection to the city is divine (see *Apology* 30e+).¹ In contrast to the itinerant sophists, for whom all motion concerns change, Socrates is a divine presence. His form of motion accomplishes only changelessness.² Plato invites us to think that his death will not change that.

With this changelessness, Socrates shows his fellow Athenians something about being. His activity of remaining in Athens involves a manifestation of form. With this presentation, Socrates communicates. However, his friends do not understand him. They receive only the content of that showing and fail to gather its form. Consequently, they are blind to Socrates' being.

This passivity makes Socrates' friends insensitive to what he is about. From *Crito*, we learn of their plan to assist Socrates to escape death by spiriting him out of Athens. Unwittingly, they thereby seek his destruction. Socrates is unmoved by their offer. Facing death Socrates is fearless. His friends are mystified. In *Phaedo*, Simmias and Cebes beseech him to justify his confidence. They, like Glaucon and Adeimantus from the *Republic*, demand a particular content from him; however, Socrates already confronts them with an answer — a form — which they ignore. Socrates' friends are thus those shackled prisoners from the *Republic*'s image of the cave, who have their backs to the showing of the craftspeople (see *Republic* 7.514+). Because they do not turn their heads — that is to say, because they do not turn their understandings to gather rather than merely receive — they fail to bring something before their understandings and so they fail to recognise what is essentially before them in the presence of Socrates.

Socrates cannot unshackle his friends merely by delivering arguments to them. In *Phaedo*, Plato shows that his friends already communicate with arguments; and, their understandings remain passive. To the merely receptive understanding, arguments offer only additional content rather than form. With this further content enters an ever-greater multiplicity, and with this, a receptive understanding strays ever further from the unity that marks conviction. Socrates thus cannot convey necessity to his friends' understandings from without. His friends must rather complete something for themselves.

5.2 ACTIVE REALITY AND PASSIVE APPEARANCES

The *Phaedo* exchange between Socrates and his friends is comic-tragic. In the hours immediately preceding his execution, those friends beseech Socrates to convince them that he has nothing to fear in death. To that end, Socrates appears to offer them argument after argument. Throughout the exchange, however, Simmias and Cebes find fault with Socrates' every defence. If Simmias and Cebes are right, there is something comic or ridiculous about Socrates' poise.

Apart from the comic circumstances of this confrontation, it may appear that Simmias and Cebes show something positive. For they appear to display a quite healthy or robust recalcitrance to what appear to be shaky arguments. In contrast to the passivity of that flow of unchecked yeses from the *Republic's* Glaucon and Adeimantus (see *Republic* chapter), Simmias and Cebes appear quite active. Such a conclusion however is a mistake. Simmias and Cebes are no more active than Glaucon and Adeimantus.

As the hour of Socrates' death rapidly approaches, it becomes increasingly clear that nothing he can say will satisfy his friends. Socrates is incapable of delivering to them that conviction for which they seek. Thus, just as Glaucon and Adeimantus' passivity determines them always to agree with Socrates, similarly, Simmias and Cebes' passivity determines them always to find Socrates wanting. For they, like Glaucon and Adeimantus, merely receive rather than gather the meaning of what Socrates says. Consequently, they read over Socrates' meaning, and, in turn, they find deficiency or incompleteness, where none exists. For they assess completeness in the given content rather than in the gathered form of what Socrates says. Simmias and Cebes seek conviction and completion by a means that draws them ever further from what has unity.

Consequently, Socrates is not the tragic figure of the dialogue; his friends are. Their failure to understand what Socrates says is really their failure to appreciate his presence. Their failure to recognise his being follows from their own lack of being. Thus, the approaching absence of Socrates is not what really impinges in a tragic way upon their discussion. Rather, his interlocutors' ever-present absence weighs down the discussion. Their effortless faultfinding maintains their distance from the form that marks both being and understanding. It turns out that to understand the meaning of what Socrates says and to understand his presence are one and the same achievement. Socrates is Plato's real argument for the immortality of the soul — arguments, for Plato, turn out to be fable like.

5.3 CONTAINING KNOWLEDGE AND MANIFESTING KNOWLEDGE

In the midst of Socrates' unsuccessful attempt to communicate with his friends, Cebes implores: 'try to persuade [us] not to fear death like a bogey' (77e; also see 63d). With such pleading, Socrates' friends in essence insist that he separate meaning from practice, and deliver them the former without requiring them to engage in the latter. Unwittingly, Cebes all but articulates this demand. In reply to Socrates' description of the changelessness of the philosopher's form of life, Cebes counters:

[i]f indeed [the soul] gathered itself together and existed by itself ... there would be much good hope, Socrates, that what you say is true; but to believe this requires a good deal of faith and persuasive argument to believe that the soul will exist after a man has died. (70ab)

Thus, Cebes assumes that he can hold a conviction (concerning the immortality of his own soul) independently of the gathering together of his soul. In a sense, therefore, Cebes thinks that being is a given. From this perspective, his activity does not constitute his being; in a merely

negative sense his actions preserve his being.³ This perceived givenness of being, makes Cebes fearful of death. For, if the being of his soul does not depend on him then he is equally out of control of its non-being. Just as he received his being from another source, he can just as simply lose it. This self-imposed passivity is the source both of Cebes' fear and his non-being.

The upshot of his interlocutors' passive take on being is that they mistake the source of their esteem for Socrates. They look past his being and assume that what is so impressive about him is something that his being contains (that is to say, something that he has merely received). According to this perspective, convictions are the mere content of an understanding. Consequently, Socrates' interlocutors do not recognise his fecundate showing and instead they recognise only his silent refusal to deliver something, which they assume awaits his delivery (and, in return, their receipt). They mistakenly suppose that Socrates at each stage of the discussion holds something back from them.

Their passive take on being thus results in a passive take on knowledge and communication. That is to say, from this perspective, knowledge and communication have no direct ontic significance. Cebes thinks that a conviction is merely contained in his being rather than something that his being must manifest. In other words, because he does not think that his convictions involve his activity he has no reason to think that they could be constitutive of his being.

Without making such a connection between a person's practices, understanding and being, Cebes cannot conceive how he can be responsible for his own being. He merely assumes that Socrates can deliver to him as content a conviction (concerning the nature of being). However, he has received such content from Socrates before; to no good effect.

Cebes collects arguments (see 63a) and has even memorised some of Socrates' arguments (see 72d+). This history of collecting gets him no closer to conviction (or recollection). For he listens to Socrates already knowing what Socrates will say. He recognises and can anticipate what Socrates will say; yet he lacks understanding.

5.4 REMEMBERING AND RECOLLECTING

Because Socrates goes on to offer what appear to be arguments, Simmias and Cebes assume that he thereby attempts directly to deliver on their request. This train of arguments begins with Cebes, who first introduces or recalls Socrates' argument from recollection; he has heard Socrates deliver it in the past. With his rehearsal, Cebes associates recollection with memory. He thus reads recollection as requiring a particular history: he explains 'we must at some previous time have learned what we now recollect' (see 72e-73a). Consequently, Cebes takes the mechanism of recollection to be analogous to the means by which he originally received that argument from Socrates. Thus, recollection for Cebes concerns mere content. He thus associates recollection with the passive receipt of memory rather than a possible activity or practice of the understanding. Simmias makes the same connection. He states:

I want to experience the very thing we are discussing, recollection, and from what Cebes undertook to say, I am now remembering and am pretty well convinced.
(73b)

Because they use their understandings in merely a receptive way, Simmias and Cebes face Meno's dilemma. Meno (in the dialogue of the same name), entreats Socrates:

[h]ow will you aim to search for something you do not know at all? If you should meet with it, how will you know that this is the thing that you did not know?
(*Meno* 80d)

He concludes from this that genuine learning — and by implication, genuine communication — is not possible (*Meno* 81a). Meno's conservatism falls out because he, like Simmias and Cebes, has a passive or merely receptive view of the understanding. Accordingly, he can conceive of learning only as direct receipt. Focusing solely on this impinging motion from without, Meno can find no mechanism from which he can explain how we can *recognise* something with which we are not already historically familiar. The only mechanism he can find for recognition is memory.

Thus, to associate recollection with memory, and, in turn, to posit a prior existence, merely aims to solve the epistemological problem of locating a source for the content of their understandings and they fail short. The real problem that they face concerns more primarily ontology (rather than merely epistemology). In securing being merely as a necessary condition for knowledge, they essentially transplant something that manifests intrinsic motion with something that merely receives or is buffeted back and forth by motion. In so doing, they cannot even make sense of their claims to know, much less their claims to be. They thus turn the problem on its head. This reversal reflects their mischaracterization of Socrates. They look past his being to what they think his being contains.

Simmias and Cebes' own lack of activity is the source of their failure to understand Socrates. That is to say, they fail to recognise self-motion precisely because they fail to engage in that type of motion themselves. Because of this inactivity, they unwittingly project what is extrinsic onto what is essentially intrinsic. In order for an understanding to recognise an intrinsic form (i.e., a form of activity that completes itself), that understanding must first gather and complete that form for itself. An understanding must thus actively create a match that does not so much facilitate a future recognition, but more immediately involves or presupposes a recognition: namely, the recognition of that understanding that finds itself completing something. This conception of recognition is quite intrinsic.

Just as Simmias and Cebes fail to recognise the self-motion of Socrates (even though he manifests this before them), so too do they fail to recognise the meaning of his argument.⁴ That is to say, even though Cebes is historically familiar with the argument from recollection he nevertheless fails to gather its meaning. Cebes and Simmias thus suppose that Socrates' argument establishes the historical and pre-existence of the soul but not its immortality. That is to say, they suppose that the argument of recollection concerns only a certain content of the understanding rather than the form that constitutes genuine understanding and being.

Because Cebes and Simmias collect or receive and remember rather than reason, they thus fail to see the vicious circularity or the utter redundancy of their explanation for the presence of what their understandings contain. Cebes essentially asserts: we cannot learn — that is, we cannot recollect — without at some previous time learning what we now recollect. In other words, he maintains that we can recognise beauty and justice because in a previous life we were introduced to them. However, that same problem of recollection can be replayed in that previous life, where they are supposedly first introduced to those forms. The infinite regress that threatens should force or summon them to think about form rather than content. They must thus come to understand recognition as possible only because of an activity of the understanding that gathers a previously unanticipated form. With this movement of their understandings, they will recognise something with which they are not already historically familiar. They will thereby recognise something as necessary or timeless rather than merely contingent or historically conditioned. With this recognition, they of necessity will manifest something necessary and so timeless. Moreover, once Socrates' friends make this move of assigning self-motion to the soul, their historical foray into the pre-existence of the soul becomes redundant.

Thus, the argument from recollection essentially argues against direct receipt. That it to say, it argues against itself as an argument, or more correctly, it argues against a certain way of reading arguments. For, to rightly understand the argument of recollection is to let go of and deny its content. It invites us to recollect rather than remember or merely receive. Thus, it invites us to deny that explicit association that Socrates makes between memory and recollection (see 73d+). We thereby deny the historicity of the understanding and thereby, we manifest its timelessness. To rightly understand the argument is thus to deliver oneself from its content as given and in its place to gather something quite unanticipated. It is thus for the understanding to refuse to contain the argument as mere content. Here Socrates implicitly draws us to think of arguments manifesting a form similar to that of fables. Thereby, Socrates invites his friends' understanding to latch onto a necessary, timeless or unchanging form and with this activity discover something about the possibility of the soul's immortality through its active changelessness.

5.5 THE MOTION OF MISOLOGY AND MISANTHROPY AND THE UNASSAILABLE AGGREGATION OF CONTENT

However, Simmias and Cebes fail to see that problem (in their own passive reading of the argument), which invites its own solution. Consequently, after Socrates finishes his re-telling of the argument from recollection, Simmias concludes: 'I do not think ... that we have proved that the soul continues to exist after death' (77b). Cebes concurs; he suggests that only

[h]alf of what needed proof has been proved, but further proof is needed that [the soul] exists no less after we have died, if the proof is to be complete. (77b)

Thus, Simmias and Cebes still face the same fear. In reply Socrates suggests that they should search the entire land 'sparing neither trouble nor expense' looking to 'find a good charmer for these fears'. He continues, adding the corrective:

[y]ou must also search among yourselves, for you might not easily find people who could do this better than yourselves. (78a)

In this way, Socrates directs his interlocutors away from him, or, more specifically, he directs them away from their direct receipt of what he says, and instead directs them to themselves, or, more particularly, he directs their understanding to turn on itself. Socrates thus warns his interlocutors that they should not look to him to deliver them their conviction.

In what follows Socrates continues to direct them to the self-motion and so changelessness of the soul (see 78b+). In turn, his interlocutors continue to characterise the soul as the product of that antithetical type of motion (from without). Simmias, for example, suggests that the soul is like a harmony played upon a lyre (where the lyre is the body) (see e.g. 85e+) and Cebes suggests that the soul is like a cloak (87b+).

This to and fro exchange of arguments does not lead Socrates' friends to any positive conviction. Rather, it leads them to greater confusion. For, with their passive receipt and their passive delivery, they engage in a type of motion that only results in change. They are merely buffeted by the argument. They nevertheless resolutely hold to their original and passive expectation. Echecrates confesses:

I am again quite in need, as if from the beginning, of some other argument to convince me that the soul does not die along with the man. (88d)

That exchange of arguments finally ends with Simmias confessing that he still harbours misgiving about what has been said (107b).

Throughout the dialogue, Socrates' friends do to him only what their singular (passive) conception of motion affords. They thus do to him what they fear will be done to them when they die: they scatter or unravel both Socrates, and what Socrates says. The more they ask Socrates to complete his proof, and, in turn, the more content they directly receive, the more multitudinous rather than unified their understandings become. With every reply from Socrates, they feel that they receive compounded cause for doubt. With these ever multiplying possibilities, Socrates' friends move further and further away from gathering conviction. Those arguments merely add to the content rather than the form of their understandings. Phaedo, confesses:

[w]e had been quite convinced by the previous argument, and they seemed to confuse us again, and to drive us into doubt not only what had already been said, but also what was going to be said, lest we be worthless as critics or the subject itself admitted of no certainty. (88c)

Socrates finally halts the exchange of arguments. That back and forth motion only leads to the type of misology to which Phaedo begins to give voice. Instead of continuing in the same way, Socrates addresses their predicament with something that looks more like a fable than an argument. He tells his friends the story of his first introduction to the thinking of Anaxagoras. He begins:

[o]ne day I heard someone reading, as he said, from a book of Anaxagoras, and saying that it is Mind that directs and is the cause of everything. I was delighted with this cause ... (97c)

However, Socrates says, when he read that work his 'wonderful hope was dashed'. For Anaxagoras made no use of Mind in his explanation of things, 'but mentioned as causes air and ether and water and many other strange things' (98b). That is to say, in his explanation of things, Anaxagoras makes no appeal to self-motion but only motion from without. Socrates goes on to suggest that the type of appeal that Anaxagoras makes to Mind is akin to first claiming that

Socrates' actions are all due to his mind, and then trying to tell the causes of everything I do, to say that the reason I am sitting here is because my body consists of bones and sinews, because the bones are hard and separated by joints, that the sinews are such as to contract and relax ... and contraction of sinews enable me to bend my limbs, and that is the cause of me sitting here with my limbs bent. (98cd)

Socrates' friends unravel him in the same way that Socrates imagines Anaxagoras unravelling him.⁵ Thus, with fable, Socrates connects the misology that was emerging from their previous discussion with the misanthropy that was unfolding in step (89d+).

In receiving Socrates as a direct communicator, his friends thus receive the meaning of the content of what he says as given. That is to say, they can only understand his meaning as historically familiar. The result is always an aggregation or merely a remixing of that with which they are already familiar (cf. 72c). Because of this, Socrates can never introduce to them (by way of a showing), and they can never introduce to themselves, any genuinely new meaning. Thus, conviction is always beyond their grasp.

This same priority of part to whole, and the resulting unassailable aggregation of content, defines Anaxagoras' view of the world. With this priority, he arrives at a World, or a Mind, made up only of motion from without — a type of motion that only results in change and can afford no sense of completion. Thus, under such a conception, there can be no genuine World, Mind or Being. So, it turns out that just as Socrates' friends can find no conviction neither can they genuinely locate Socrates. Phaedo, Simmias and Cebes seek to go through him, to what he contains. In this way, they mirror Euthyphro, who attempts to go beyond what is godly to locate value in mere content (or what is essentially external to the divine).

In connecting misology and misanthropy, Socrates summons his friends to an activity that will counter their passivity: he summons them to gather the connection between the form of good people and the form of good arguments. Thereby he invites his friends to stop directly receiving the meaning of what he says and instead to gather meaning. That is, he indirectly invites them to read his arguments as if they were fables (or, in other words, Socrates indirectly invites his interlocutors to recognise as stronger what they previously received as weaker arguments),⁶ and, in turn, to read his fables as arguments.

5.6 FABLES AND ARGUMENTS

As the dialogue commences, Socrates invites his friends to this understanding of communication: he summons them to conflate the form (rather than the content) of being, fables and arguments. When his friends enter his cell, they find him writing poetry. Thinking that he discovers Socrates doing something new, Phaedo asks him about his apparent change of practice. Within his reply, Socrates offers the following distinction: 'a poet, if he is to be a poet, must compose fables, not arguments' (61b).

Here Socrates seems to draw a clear-cut division between the practices of philosophers and the practices of poets. Fables, according to this division, employ an indirect mode of communication; they thus require us to gather rather than receive their meaning. Consider, for example, the fable that Socrates relates immediately before offering the above distinction: he describes two animals with their heads joined. Because of this peculiar anatomical conjunction, if someone 'pursues and catches the one [creature], he is almost always bound to catch the other also' (60bc). Socrates explains that his story concerns the connection between the apparent opposites pleasure and pain. With this accompanying explanation, he shows that the intended meaning of fables is orthogonal to the literal meaning of their express content. That is to say,

with his commentary, Socrates implicitly emphasises that the meaning of fables must be gathered rather than directly received.

In his usual manner, Socrates relates fables throughout the dialogue. His final fable concerns 'the nature of the earth as a whole' (111c+). With this story, he offers no elucidating commentary; at its completion, he merely observes: '[n]o sensible man would insist that these things are as I have described them' (114d). With this rider, Socrates does not mean to suggest that his fable has no meaning. Rather, he merely warns his interlocutors away from resting content with the express or given meaning of its content (that is to say, he warns them against becoming preoccupied with questions concerning the story's literal accuracy). In so doing, he implicitly directs them to gather its form.⁷

Arguments, on the other hand, at least, given Socrates' express contrast of them with fables, appear to employ a quite opposite, and so direct, mode of communication. That is to say, we should understand arguments literally; and for this reason, we are able to understand them in a piecemeal way. During their delivery, we can therefore rightly understand their constitutive parts. It is only with this presumption that Cebes is able to assert that Socrates proves half of what he needs to prove. If Cebes were to look at the determination of meaning flowing from the form to the content of communication then he could not talk of possessing half of what is complete (cf. 77b). This piecemeal take on meaning and completion can never accommodate the form of fables. With fables, we must await the totality of their expression before we can begin to gather their intended meaning. That gathering transforms the meaning of the fable's content as originally given. In other words, the genuine, or gathered, meaning of a fable is orthogonal to its received meaning. Because of this final determination of the meaning of a fable's content by its overall form, fables, in contrast with arguments, are genuine, or unified, wholes.⁸

However, if this distinction between possible modes of communication (and their accompanying modes of understanding) is the one that Socrates has in mind (when he states 'a poet, if he is to be a poet, must compose fables, not arguments'), he cannot mean us to accept it. For, he offers that division (between philosophy and fable) in the midst of a fable (see 60d+).⁹

Thus, if we allow the broad exegetical directive we receive from our initial express reading of that division to determine what we gather from our re-reading of that division — now recognising it as part of a fable — it turns out that what we once received and what is now determining our approach, now escapes our grasp. That is to say, on our re-reading, it turns out that what we initially accepted, and what we now apply, eludes us. In its place, we gather something quite opposite in meaning.

Because Socrates engrosses the meaning of the content of what he says in the form of what he says,¹⁰ he frustrates any direct receipt of his meaning. He therefore summons his friends to gather his meaning. Because of this reflexive aspect of his communication, there can only be one way of understanding his *Phaedo* division: Socrates essentially invites his friends to gather that there is no genuine division between his use of fable and argument.

Through this showing by Socrates, Plato shows us how we should read his works. Plato thus does not seek to impose from without something upon our understandings. Rather, he invites or summons us to an activity through which we gather and complete a formal internal analogue of what we are to recognise. In this way, we are to read his philosophy as fable. Plato challenges us to recognise Socrates (as a presence) as the best of arguments.

Socrates' friends fail to make sense of what he says. The result, according to Socrates is dire. At the tail end of his frustrating exchange with them, Socrates concludes that misology and misanthropy have a common cause. That common cause involves the misanthropist seeing people as only direct communicators and the misologist seeing arguments after the same manner. Neither the misanthropist nor the misologist recognise wholes or completed forms. For this reason, both the misanthropist and the misologist lack being.

NOTES

- ¹ The *Republic* and *Phaedrus* are the only dialogues that place Socrates beyond the city walls. In both of these cases, he does not really leave the city proper. In the former case, he is only a stones throw away in the port city of Pireaus. In *Phaedrus* is just beyond the city walls. Alcibiades, in his *Symposium* speech, describes Socrates' heroic feats on the battlefield. Once again, Socrates in defending Athens does not really leave the city.
- ² Compare the opening scene of the *Symposium* where Socrates turns up late to Agathon's gathering. He has been standing motionless (in thought) in a neighbour's porch (*Symposium* 175a+). In *Phaedo* we are told that Socrates places his feet firmly on the ground and throughout the discussion he does not move (*Phaedo* 61d).
- ³ He can choose to preserve his being by his choice not to take his own life and his resolve to prevent others from taking it (see 62d); and, in a more positive way, he can try to preserve his being by daily maintenance.
- ⁴ Simmias and Cebes' passive reading makes no sense. With it, they essentially assert that they are incapable of recognising something without already have a match contained in memory. Thus, for the same reason that they do not recognise what is so distinctive about Socrates in the hours leading up to his death, they will similarly fail to recognise that nature in a prior life. Positing a prior introduction thus does nothing to explain how conditions are ever sufficient for recognition. It does not matter historically when or how many times Cebes and Simmias are introduced to what is just, or, what is beautiful, or, what moves itself. If their understandings do not actively manifest those forms, they still will fail to recognise them for what they are no matter how many times they are confronted by them. Those things that manifest intrinsic value can only be actively recognised by an understanding and not merely historically introduced to an understanding.
- ⁵ In *Phaedrus* Plato also discusses the connection between Anaxagoras and what Socrates' friends do to him. In that dialogue, Socrates suggests that Anaxagoras influenced the rhetoric of Pericles (*Phaedrus* 270a). Here, Plato identifies Anaxagoras' metaphysics as the only kind afforded by a direct conception of communication.
- ⁶ In the *Apology*, Meletus accuses Socrates of making the weaker arguments stronger. In a sense, this accusation is correct; but to see it in this way we must first rethink what makes a good argument good. Reading arguments like the argument from recollection or any of those arguments Socrates presents in his own defence at his trial as direct communication makes them weak. But to recognise them as indirect (or, as primarily involving a showing) is precisely to recognise them as strong and it is to unsettle that received understanding of what makes arguments strong.
- ⁷ Only with this distinction, between gathered meaning and received meaning, can we make sense of Socrates' *Apology* attack on the poets (see *Apology* 22c).
- ⁸ In *Gorgias*, in the midst of a heated argument from which his interlocutors attempt to escape, Socrates suggests 'that it isn't permitted to give up in the middle of telling stories A head must be put on it, so it won't go about headless' (*Gorgias* 505cd; also cf. *Phaedrus* 264c).
- ⁹ We may think that Socrates here engages merely in autobiography (or in a mere telling of history) rather than fable. However, to proceed with this exegetical assumption essentially begs the question against the story's possible philosophical worth. For an example of Socrates' blunt refusal to search for the historical truth of myths, see *Phaedrus* 229c.
- ¹⁰ For a playful and obvious example of how Plato thinks the form of a communication determines the meaning of its content, see Socrates' discussion of different narrative forms and in particular his re-writing of a portion of Homer's *Iliad* (*Republic* 3.393d+). With this change of narrative form, Socrates shows how the meaning of what is said also changes. In this regard, consider how Plato distances us from the impact of Socrates' death by the *Phaedo* account's predominant use of simple rather than imitative narrative.

PHAEDRUS
TRUTH AS BEAUTY AND BACKLOVE AS RECIPROCITY

ABSTRACT..... 47

6.1 SIMPLE AND SAVAGE UNDERSTANDINGS..... 47

6.2 RAPE AND COMMUNION..... 48

6.3 LOVE AND HUNGER 49

6.4 COMPLEXITY AND SELF-CONTRADICTION 49

6.5 SPEAKING THE UN-UNDERSTANDABLE AND UNDERSTANDING THE UNSPEAKABLE 51

6.6 TRUTH AND BEAUTY 52

6.7 MAKING BEAUTY UGLY AND BACKLOVE..... 53

6.8 MEMORY AND RECIPROCITY 54

NOTES..... 55

ABSTRACT

In *Phaedrus* Plato contrasts his own conception of love with that of the pederast. With this comparison, Plato also shows the difference between two quite opposite modes of communication — he tells us the one and shows us the other. His conclusion is surprising: the pederast brutalises love in his willingness to directly speak of it. Plato concludes that we can only directly speak of those things we cannot understand. If we try to speak directly of those things we can genuinely understand, we are bound to brutalise them and so we are bound to quite fundamentally misunderstand them. Moreover, we threaten to savage those with whom we speak and we most certainly abuse ourselves. Thus, according to Plato, a genuine understanding demands a reverent silence. Under this quite peculiar conception of communication as showing rather than telling, Plato's conception of love takes on the same fecundate form.

6.1 SIMPLE AND SAVAGE UNDERSTANDINGS

From one complicated perspective, *Phaedrus* is a work that concerns itself with many things. From this viewpoint, the dialogue deals with what it is to communicate to others, what it is to receive the communication from others, what it is to love, what it is to be loved, the nature of friendship, the nature of desert, etc. From another perspective, however, *Phaedrus* concerns itself with a single thing. Under this aspect, what it is to be, what it is to communicate, and what it is to love, all necessarily coincide; else, there can be no genuine communication, love or being. Plato shows both mutually excluding perspectives; and invites us to gather the one, rather than merely receive the multiplicity that is the other.

Each perspective Plato associates with a particular kind of creature. Early on in the dialogue, Socrates questions:

[a]m I a beast more complicated and savage than Typhon, or am I a tamer, simpler animal with a share in a divine and gentle nature? (230a)

With this rehearsal, Socrates shows the form of his own enquiry. Importantly for Socrates, such an enquiry does not merely uncover something; rather, it decides it. For, with that activity of the understanding, as it reflects upon itself, its form becomes a product of its own activity. Thereby it becomes godlike. Consequently, this self-knowledge has a directly ontic import. According to this understanding, to know oneself is precisely to become a self. Thus, to enter upon the enquiry commanded by the Delphic inscription (see 230a) is precisely to decide one's own nature as divine rather than complicated.

Being such a simple creature is precisely what it is to be a knower. It is not possible to know oneself as a complicated creature. In other words, one can only know oneself as simple, that is, active. This activity is the activity of knowing. Under such an understanding of what it is to know, knowledge does not concern what an understanding contains. Rather, it essentially involves the activity, form or finishing of the understanding. Since knowledge essentially involves a practice, incontinence is inconceivable. Thus, knowledge cannot merely sit as a premise in a practical syllogism and thus only inferentially or remotely connect to a possible act (cf. *Protagoras* 352d+).

Plato goes on to differentiate two types of motion, motion from without and self-motion (245c), and he associates these with the complicated and simple creatures respectively. The complicated creature does not reflect on itself; rather, it directs motion (savagely) to what is without. Because of this outwardly directed motion, it cannot gather or preserve a self. The complicated creature does not rightly have a self; its type of motion Socrates associates with mindlessness (see 270a). Such a creature is mindless or complicated precisely because it does not manifest the unifying type of self-motion (which gathers or finishes a self).

Plato associates the savage creature — that is, the creature that communicates via an outwardly directed motion — with the rhetorician. According to this assessment, the rhetorician is essentially a pederast. The, rhetorician-pederast slavishly imposes himself on (or

invades) the other. As a method of communication, this is self-defeating. For not only does that method's motion frustrate the possibility of the otherness of the other (and thereby it frustrates the possibility of genuine reciprocity from the other), but, in addition, its motion also frustrates the possibility of the rhetorician-pederast being a self. For, with the use of this impinging method, there can be no presentation of a self as a source from which that supposed communication or love emanates. Thus, with this method, nothing communicates; nothing loves.

Plato identifies the rhetorician Pericles as the proximate father of this type of supposed communication; the more remote source is the mindless metaphysics of Anaxagoras (see 270a). For, with all his talk about mind, Anaxagoras transforms the unity of self-motion, which defines mind as mind, into something complicated. Thus, the way he talks about mind dissipates mind. In this way, he essentially denies mind (see *Phaedo* 96+). Just as Anaxagoras' talk of mind is self-contradictory¹ so also is the rhetorician's method of direct communication and the pederast's view of love.

Plato contrasts the complicated pederast-rhetorician with the divine philosopher Socrates, who is self-mover, an active lover and an indirect communicator. Throughout the ensuing dialogue, Plato pits his philosopher against the rhetorician-pederast. In that battle, Plato makes quite explicit what he means by bad love and bad communication: Socrates characterises this way of loving and communicating as that way in which 'wolves love lambs' (241d). However, Socrates does not directly tell Phaedrus what he means by genuine communication. Nevertheless, he does genuinely communicate. He thus shows Phaedrus what it is; and, in so doing, he leaves Phaedrus to gather rather than merely receive that meaning. According to the showing of Socrates, genuine love and genuine communication involve a showing or manifestation of form and a reciprocal gathering of that form by the other. In other words, the lover engages in self-motion rather than a motion that is directed to invade the (otherness of the) other. In order to recognise this form, Phaedrus' understanding must first instantiate it; thereby he will genuinely reciprocate that motion.

6.2 RAPE AND COMMUNION

The dialogue commences as Phaedrus and Socrates meet. Phaedrus has spent that morning listening to the pederast Lysias (227a; 228a). Lysias is the tragic but absent figure of the dialogue. His absence from the dialogue denotes his greater absence from being; and he is absent from being precisely because of the way he communicates. Lysias is a direct communicator; with what he says, he seeks to occupy or possess Phaedrus. He repeats to Phaedrus (228a), what he wants Phaedrus to believe. Because he communicates by way of an outwardly directed motion, he presents no genuine self when he speaks. We only hear from him when Phaedrus regurgitates his speech. Even here, he does not intend anyone to recognise him; for in that speech Lysias pretends to be what he is not. According to Phaedrus, Lysias' speech

is aimed at seducing a beautiful boy, but the speaker is not in love with him — this is actually what is so clever and elegant about it: Lysias argues that it is better to give your favours to someone who does not love you than to someone who does. (227c)

Phaedrus has already started to commit that speech to memory and he carries a copy of it with him under his cloak.² After a little coaxing, he reads the speech to Socrates.

Within that speech, Lysias argues that it is more prudent for a boy to give his favours to a non-lover than to a lover. The non-lover is not overwhelmed by love; rather he has 'put his heart into whatever he thinks will give pleasure' (231b). Lysias suggests that while the lover is out of control (232a, 231d), the non-lover is not: he merely makes it his goal to win the boy's favours (233a). A lover begs for the favours of his beloved. Lysias however wants Phaedrus to consider him a friend, who deserves those favours (see 233d+). He concludes his speech suggesting that this arrangement 'really should work to the benefit of both sides' (234c).

Lysias thus attempts to persuade his beloved that the non-lover — rather than the slavish lover — deserves favours (see 233d+). He supposes that he can get what he wants by

claiming desert rather than by slavishly begging. However, pursuing this strategy (that is, by trying to persuade the boy of this supposedly alternative type of relationship), Lysias betrays himself quite transparently as slavish rather than deserving.

6.3 LOVE AND HUNGER

Holding love to be essentially a hunger, Lysias cannot conceive that love could be truly reciprocal. Nevertheless, he desires reciprocity. Thus, he can only approach that end negatively, that is, by appearing to reduce or deny the quite fundamental asymmetry of his relationship with his beloved. He does this by pretending that there is no love to reciprocate. The closest he can get to reciprocity, is by getting Phaedrus all to himself and by instituting between himself and Phaedrus an economy of mutual benefit. Thus, Lysias' strategy is first to convince his beloved that he is not in love with him; then, he turns his beloved against all his other lovers. Thus, Lysias will only succeed in his limited aim insofar as he convinces Phaedrus that he is not what he is, and, in addition, insofar as he has Phaedrus reject what he really is. There is thus something quite essentially self-defeating about Lysias' approach. Lysias seems to be aware that what he most wants to do to his beloved frustrates what he most wants from his beloved. Lysias really wants to be not only the lover but also the beloved.

The rhetorician's strategy is to persuade the other that he is not about what he is in fact about. In this way, he seeks to change (or make complex) the other to the end of having the other accommodate or tolerate him (as complex). He seeks quite directly to make others like himself (cf. *Euthyphro* 3c). After this method, Lysias seeks to introduce into Phaedrus a certain content of belief, which is alien to the self-motion of Phaedrus' understanding. He thus treats Phaedrus' understanding as if it is purely receptive. He treats him as a complex rather than a simple creature.

Even though Lysias' strategy is complicated or self-defeating, he seems to succeed in deceiving Phaedrus. In achieving this however, Lysias does not really get what he wants. For, that victory leaves him with a mere transaction, replication and regurgitation rather than reciprocity. That is to say, he secures something complicated rather than something complete; of necessity, this is unsatisfying.

Therefore, even though Lysias does appear to win Phaedrus over, he has no real security in that victory; for, there is no genuine meeting of minds. Direct communication is self-defeating for it only directly persuades the other by denying the otherness (that is, the self-motion) of the other. Lysias can only successfully impinge directly on Phaedrus' understanding if he successfully thwarts the self-motion of that understanding. Thus, the other's understanding is not really convinced but only impinged upon. In this passive state, other motions from without are just as liable to sway it — Socrates for example can just as easily turn Phaedrus away from Lysias. Socrates however goes about things in an opposite way. For, in accordance with the Delphic command, he focuses on what is within rather than on what is without. He thereby directly addresses that complexity by manifesting simplicity, which indirectly invites reciprocity.

6.4 COMPLEXITY AND SELF-CONTRADICTION

Lysias direct form of communication expresses a way of valuing. In communicating with Phaedrus he imposes that way on him. In receiving that communication, Phaedrus receives or accommodates that implicit conception of value. Accordingly, Phaedrus associates value with what can be transferred and in turn, he associates what is complete with an accumulation of such content; he thus ignores form. Phaedrus assesses Lysias' speech as: the very best, clever, elegant, superb and complete (227c; 228a; 234c; 235b). He thinks (along with Lysias) that the speech is complete because it has gone on long enough (234c) and because it expresses everything that can be said on the topic (235b).

Socrates' judgement is more measured. He dismisses the given content of the speech as repetitive and self-contradictory, and, he judges the form, thrown together at random (235a, 246b). In the face of Phaedrus' adulation of Lysias, Socrates boasts that he 'can make a different speech, even better than Lysias' (235c). Phaedrus, continuing to prioritise content to form,³ supposes that Socrates has 'promised to make another speech making more points, and

better ones, without repeating a word' from Lysias' speech (235d). Socrates pulls Phaedrus up on that extreme view concerning the origin of meaning and Phaedrus revises his expectation; nevertheless, he maintains his passive focus on content and continues to suppose that value can precede form. He says to Socrates: 'add anything of value to complete what we already have in hand' (236b).

In order to make the speech complete, Socrates, in a sense, does add something (he also eliminates something). After Socrates finishes that reformulation however, Phaedrus does not recognise it as complete; he supposes that Socrates still needs to add a second half to his speech.⁴ Here, Socrates confronts Phaedrus' understanding with an opposite conception of what it is to be complete. Phaedrus will not find the conditions for its completion if he continues to look where Lysias points. In presenting something apparently contentfully incomplete, Socrates invites Phaedrus to think in a very different way, concentrating on the determination of form, rather than the givenness of content.⁵ Here, Socrates not only implicitly invites Phaedrus to think about meaning and communication in a radically different way, but also to rethink his conception of love.

Socrates premises his version of the speech by explaining that its author is in love with the boy to whom he directs the speech. Within the speech, however, the author makes out that he is not in love. Upon that express duplicity, Socrates maintains and cleans up Lysias' argument that the boy should not give his favours to lovers (237b). In this context, Lysias' voice clearly defeats itself. Socrates thus makes the contradiction of Lysias' speech quite explicit and uses this to summon Phaedrus' understanding.

In that reformed speech, Socrates suggests that 'a man who is ruled by desire and is a slave to pleasure will turn his boy into whatever is most pleasing to himself' (238e). Such a lover will seek the total dependence of his beloved (239ab). Thus, lovers who seek pleasure seek to make their beloved passive. For this reason, Socrates suggests that 'the friendship of a lover arises without any good will at all' (241c). Thus, the lover who seeks the dependence of the beloved does not aim at beauty and instead aims at something quite opposite. Socrates suggests that the 'unreasoning desire that overpowers a person's impulse to do right and is driven to take pleasure in beauty ... takes its name from the word force (*rhomé*) and is called *eros*' (238bc). Socrates concludes his speech:

[y]ou should know that the friendship of a lover arises without any good will at all. No, like food, its purpose is to sate hunger. 'Do wolves love lambs? That's how lovers befriend a boy!' (241cd)

Phaedrus is disappointed. He supposes that Socrates does not complete the speech; he expects Socrates to go on to give reasons for why a boy should give his favours to the non-lover (241d) — this aspect Socrates eliminates from Lysias' speech. Phaedrus thus continues to focus on content; he merely allows Socrates' speech to impinge upon him. Consequently, Phaedrus takes the meaning of the speech as given and so he fails to do something quite basic. He thus recognises in that speech only what he already believes or what he has already received from Lysias. And for this reason, he merely detects something missing rather than something successfully defeated.

Socrates responds to Phaedrus' express disappointment, by explaining: '[d]idn't you notice, my friend, that even though I am criticizing the lover, I passed beyond lyric into epic poetry?' (241e). Here Socrates (as he does to his interlocutors in *Phaedo*) invites Phaedrus to a different conception of what marks completion. He encourages Phaedrus to start thinking about or gathering form rather than merely receiving content. He must thus think of Socrates' argument not as directly delivering something to him; rather, he should assume that Socrates presents a form more akin to that presented by a poet. Socrates has already warned him against directly receiving the content of poems; he implicitly suggests that to receive mere content in that way is an anathema to the type of motion that the Delphic inscription commands (see 229cd).

In order for Phaedrus to start on the activity of gathering the meaning of Socrates' speech (rather than merely receiving a meaning), he must first assume that Socrates has finished

or completed something. That is to say, he must assume that there is something to be understood (see *Protagoras* chapter). Wielding that presumption (or principle) of the understanding, his understanding already reaches beyond what it can merely receive or contain. Acting on this principle, the understanding anticipates its own form. With this expectation of meaning, the understanding already strays from its merely receptive capacity. For that principle comes from the understanding's understanding of what it is to understand. Here, it knows something of itself and it actively draws itself away from complexity to something essentially simple. The origin of that principle points to the only possible origin of all genuine meaning.

6.5 SPEAKING THE UN-UNDERSTANDABLE AND UNDERSTANDING THE UNSPEAKABLE

Socrates disowns his speech, suggesting it is 'close to being impious' (242d). For, even though he subverts Lysias' aim, he still seems to denigrate love; 'Love', he goes on to suggest, 'is a god or something divine' (242de). Rather than showing love manifesting the self-motion of the divine (see 245e), Socrates' and Lysias' previous speeches reduce it to a savage or slavish hunger. Because those speeches refer to something that cannot be reciprocated or completed, they do not really speak of love at all.

In claiming that 'Love is a god' Socrates summons Phaedruss to conceive of love in terms of the divine. In other words, he summons him to consider what it would be for a perfect being to love. This type of move is familiar to the dialogues: in *Euthyphro*, for example, Socrates invites his interlocutor to do this with piety (and value). In *Meno*, Socrates has Meno's slave show Meno what it is divinely or genuinely to possess something. In *Apology*, Socrates summons the jurors to gather what it is to communicate, what it is to teach and what it is to understand while considering what it would be for a divine being to communicate, etc. In *Phaedo*, Socrates summons his friends to think of the nature of being in terms of the divine. In all these cases, Socrates invites his interlocutors to invert their previous take on these notions.

This strategy produces mystical or ineffable results. However, this is not to say that Plato directs the understanding to something beyond its reach. Rather, this approach firmly ties the meanings in question to the understanding. It is thus a mysticism involving immanence rather than transcendence. For Plato's method merely re-introduces the understanding to itself (that is, it confronts it with its own peculiar type of motion). For according to Plato's understanding, the (self-motion of the) understanding is divine. Thus, even though Plato's method draws us to something ineffable — something of which we cannot directly speak (cf. 246a) — it is not ineffable because we cannot understand it, rather it is ineffable precisely because we can understand it. Thus, according to Plato's understanding of what it is to understand, we can only directly speak of those things that cannot be understood. For the motion of direct communication (that outwardly directed motion) is an anathema to the self-motion that essentially defines an understanding as an understanding.

Thus, direct communication for Plato betrays a lack of understanding or conveys something that cannot be understood. Genuine understandings essentially involve necessity, and, necessity, no one can directly convey. In other words: to directly speak about an understanding is to decide something illegitimately about the understanding's nature. By making that nature speakable, one thereby renders it un-divine and so un-understandable. Thus, to talk directly of love is to make it something savage and that which is savage or complex cannot be understood. Similarly, to talk directly about mind, is to confer on it the character of mindlessness (cf. *Phaedo* 96+). There is something un-understandable about such communication. It conveys something complicated (for the form of direct communication disperses) and it is therefore self-contradictory (for a self must be simple rather than complicated).

Lysias repeats this Anaxagorean error when he speaks directly of love. He characterises love as involving an impinging motion from without. Thus, the nature of love mirrors the form of his (direct) communication. In this case, the symmetry of this connection between the content and the form of Lysias' communication looks quite contrived. Nevertheless, with this contrivance Plato merely emphasises something that is for him

unavoidable: namely, that asymmetry between the essential form of an understanding and that which is manifest by direct communication. Regardless of what Lysias happens to say directly about love, he cannot preserve it as something divine. Even if he did have a more adequate (that is to say, divine) understanding of love he cannot, on that account, reduce what essentially involves self-motion to something carried by an outwardly directed motion. To attempt this type of conversion is immediately to transform the nature of the understanding: that is, it would be to convert its essential form to something that implicitly, if not explicitly, emphasises content. It is to render that concept discursive but un-understandable. Plato's *Phaedrus* emphasises this necessary connection between the form and content of communication. Plato's implicit claim is that form unavoidably determines meaning (of content). With direct communication, there is no real form (that is, it has no form that can be completed) and so no real meaning. Plato's solution to this problem of direct communication is Socrates. Socrates shows something rather than directly tells something, and this showing is central to what it is genuinely to communicate, to love and to be.

6.6 TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Socrates goes on to give a second speech — a corrective — championing genuine love — a love that essentially involves the self-motion of the divine (245c+). He premises his account by suggesting: '[t]o describe what the soul actually is would require a very long account, altogether a task for a god in every way; but to say what it is like is humanly possible and takes less time' (246a). Thus, because the nature of the soul is ineffable,⁶ Socrates only talks about it indirectly by means of a myth (246a).

In that fable, he connects each soul's self-motion to its appreciation of truth or beauty. Embodied souls, according to that myth, are those souls that fall to earth after having sacrificed the power of self-motion to motion from without (248a). Before its fall, a soul has wings; and, with those wings, it ascends to the presence of the divine. These wings 'are akin to the divine, which has beauty, wisdom, goodness, and everything of that sort' (246e). The soul's wings draw it up into the presence of 'a being that really is what it is' (247c), and there, the wings are nourished and grow (246e). Thus, with its self-motion, the soul becomes evermore divine.

According to this story, the wings of a soul are lost when souls strike one another 'as each tries to get ahead of the others' (248bc). With this type of motion from without, a soul's wings are trampled and crippled, and they lose their plumage (246e; 248ab). Thus, the being of a soul dissipates or the soul becomes less and less divine when it engages in outwardly directed motion — that is to say, when it engages in direct communication.

Socrates goes on to suggest that, in its embodied state, in the presence of beauty a soul's wings can regenerate and grow (249d). For, appreciating beauty as beauty essentially involves self-motion. For, beauty is the presentation of a (completed) form and because of this, a soul cannot appreciate it merely with the passive or receptive use of the understanding. Rather, to recognise a completed form the understanding must gather and complete it itself. Thus, the understanding recognises beauty only by manifesting that same form through its own activity (cf. 246de). Beauty thus invites a genuine (that is to say, active) reciprocity from the other.

Here, the indirect communication that is the manifestation of something simple rather than something complex transcends the self-contradiction of direct communication. The fecundate showing of what is simple invites or summons in the other reciprocity of form or activity. That is to say, it invites or indirectly demands a gathering from the other. Otherwise, it defies understanding. In other words, self-motion can only be recognised by the other upon the other engaging in self-motion (for intrinsic value cannot passively be recognised).

In contrast, the complexity of Lysias defies understanding. He shows something that cannot be gathered. Thus, Anaxagoras' move to want to talk directly about mind is wrong-headed. He would more genuinely communicate something about the nature of mind if he refused to talk of it and rather manifested its nature, as Socrates does as he sits motionless in the Athenian cell awaiting his execution. Socrates communicates in the only way we can rightly conceive of a god communicating. That way is also the only way we can conceive of a god

loving. Love here is not a hunger but a manifestation of form, which in turn invites the same activity in others. This reciprocity of form Socrates calls 'backlove' (255d).

6.7 MAKING BEAUTY UGLY AND BACKLOVE

Socrates' talk of backlove is meant for Lysias' ears. What is from Lysias' perspective, impossible really is according to Socrates possible. Reciprocity is impossible from Lysias' perspective for he associates love with hunger. Thus, the most he can hope for is coinciding appetites.

Lysias is really the one who refuses to reciprocate in an appropriate way. In offering that speech, he does not treat beauty as he ought. Rather, he means to introduce something quite directly into the beautiful boy to whom he directs his speech. Introducing additional content into beauty is precisely to brutalise or make beauty ugly. Lysias respects neither the autonomy nor economy of beauty.⁷ Socrates, in his speech on this savage type of love, warns Phaedrus that the type of lover to whom Lysias refers will seek to destroy the beauty of his beloved (238e+); such a lover will seek to make his beloved totally dependent upon him (239b). If he cannot make his beloved reciprocate, he can make him dependant; and he gains this dependence by destroying his beloved's beauty. Thus, with his victory, he gains something he does not want; for, he gains something ugly rather than something beautiful. The lover's attempt to possess the beauty of his beloved only threatens to destroy that beauty. According to an externalist conception of what it is to possess, beauty (as an intrinsic form) cannot be possessed. Beauty is essentially autonomous (or divine). The lover can only rightly aim at possessing beauty in an intrinsic rather than in an extrinsic way: that is to say, the love can only possess beauty through manifesting it rather than trying to invade or conquer it.

Lysias really wants to be not only the lover but also the beloved. He desires reciprocity. However, what Lysias most wants to do to his beloved frustrates what he most wants from his beloved. When Socrates describes how the beloved can come to express backlove for the lover (255d), he seems to offer some promise to Lysias' hope. However, it is a summoning promise, for, by following its invitation Lysias will be led away from the conception of love that led him to follow that invitation. For, the lover can only invite backlove from his beloved if he does not do what he most wants to do to his beloved. Positively, that is to say, the lover must manifest form (or beauty) rather than directly impinging upon the beauty of his beloved. In order to get what he most wants the pederast must cease to be a pederast. This change in the way Lysias treats his beloved will in turn change what Lysias most wants. If Lysias manifests a beautiful form, he will thereby summon the beloved to reciprocate in kind. Backlove turns out to be the reciprocity invited by the lover's manifestation of a beautiful form. Backlove is thus itself the manifestation of a beautiful form (rather than a trading of favours).⁸

That gathering invited by the fecundity of genuine love and genuine communication is what Plato demands' from us if we are rightly to appreciate the fable he tells concerning Socrates. The dialogues are Plato's expression of backlove for Socrates. Accordingly, there is a formal identity between Socrates' and Plato's expression. That is to say, that showing of Socrates is the showing of Plato. Even so, there is hardly any backlove expressly shown within the dialogues.⁹ Rather, throughout the dialogues, Plato shows Socrates' interlocutors failing to gather his meaning. Even in the hours immediately preceding Socrates' death, Plato tragically depicts Socrates' closest friends quite fundamentally misunderstanding his form of communication (see *Phaedo* and *Crito*). Throughout these failures to communicate, Socrates maintains a form of silence (a silence only matched by Plato's ever present silence). And, he must maintain that silence. For he cannot solve this communication problem by directly telling his interlocutors what he is about. For this problem of communication centres on the passivity of his interlocutors. He will only feed that passivity by changing his mode of communication from indirect to direct. And with that direct mode he will cease to show them what he previously did. Instead of Socrates' interlocutors trying to brutalise his manifestation of beauty, he will instead cease to manifest beauty and instead brutalize them.

6.8 MEMORY AND RECIPROCITY

After that fable concerning the possibility of backlove and the possibility of genuine communication, Socrates leads the discussion back to the problems of direct communication. He offers a myth concerning Theuth and King Thamus. Theuth, Socrates suggests, is the god

who first discovered number and calculation, geometry and astronomy, as well as the games of checkers and dice, and above all else, writing. (274cd)

Theuth displays his arts before King Thamus and urges the King to disseminate those arts to his people. Before making that decision, King Thamus asked Theuth to explain the pros and cons of each art. In contrast to his judgements on the other arts, Theuth can find only advantages and no disadvantages to the art of writing. He boasts:

O King, here is something, once learned, will make the Egyptians wiser and will improve their memory; I have discovered a potion for memory and wisdom. (274e)

King Thamus is unimpressed; he supposes that the art of writing will

introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who use it: they will not practice using memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on the signs from others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. ... Your invention will enable them to hear many things without being properly taught, and they will imagine that they have come to know much while for the most part they will know nothing. (275ab)

When Socrates finishes this fable, Phaedrus immediately accuses him of making up stories (275b).¹⁰ Here, Phaedrus (as he does as their conversation commences – cf. 229b+) displays an unhealthy pre-occupation with the external origins of truth. Here, he wrongly connects authority to that impinging motion from without and is suspicious of inventions of the understanding (or the understanding remembering from inside). Phaedrus is thus that type of person King Thamus foresees, who, after externalising authority (or after suffering the brutalising direct communication from others), forgets how to remember from the inside.

King Thamus' attack on writing summons Plato's readers to free Plato's dialogues from that censure. For King Thamus' worry expresses Plato's worry about his audience reading his dialogues in a certain way. However, reading the dialogues in merely this receptive way has King Thamus' attack on writing catch up with Plato's writing. And so, from such a reading, Plato attacks his own attack on writing. Thus, the merely receptive reading of that myth is left with nothing to receive. Plato here frustrates the merely receptive understanding.

In order to receive King Thamus' attack as Plato's attack we must thus wrest Plato from its reach. That is to say, we cannot merely receive that attack but rather must gather its meaning. Thus, with his myth of King Thamus, Plato shows how written communication can escape the attack from that King. That myth thus turns out to be negative in its delivery and positive in its active receipt.

Plato thus invites us to recognise what he shows something and so he invites us away from merely receiving what he appears to tell. In writing his dialogues Plato obeys Socrates' stipulation:

[e]very speech must be put together like a living creature; it must be neither without head nor without legs; and it must have a middle and extremities that are fitting both to one another and to the whole work. (264c)

Plato thus presents something complete — that is to say, he presents something beautiful. Beauty is its own authority; and thus it is both the touchstone of truth and the end of the activity of the understanding. In other words, an understanding can only be recognised as active if it manifests a beautiful form. Plato's showing requires from us a reciprocal activity or manifestation of form. With the presentation of beauty, the understanding can recognise only through its own activity a completed form. The understanding can only recognise truth upon its own activity rather than with a mere receipt. That is to say, it can only recognise that a source is authoritative by itself becoming an authority by becoming a genuine source. Beauty has an essential role here. The authoritative understanding is a beautiful understanding. If truth is not

beauty, then the understanding has no way of recognising truth other than through mere receipt and that way is not to possess an understanding at all (see the *Euthyphro* chapter — Euthyphro can make no sense of the nature of truth or authority with his merely receptive understanding).

NOTES

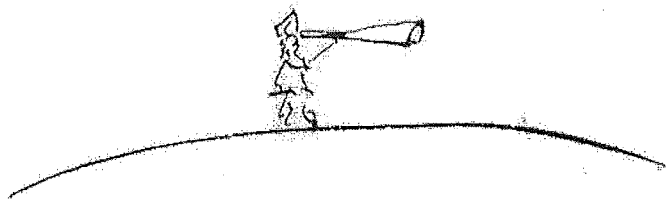
- ¹ It is self-contradictory in the sense that its form of delivery effectively denies (or annihilates) the very identity or source that that delivery seems to presuppose.
- ² In carrying that speech, he carries something essentially external. Even upon committing it to memory he will still carry something essentially alien or external to his understanding.
- ³ To suggest that Phaedrus prioritises content to form is just to suggest that he attaches meaning entirely to the given content of communication. The alternative conception has meaning of that supposedly given content (downwardly) determined by the (completed) form of communication.
- ⁴ Compare how Simmias and Cebes accuse Socrates of proving only half the case for the immortality of the soul (see *Phaedo* chapter). There is no sense in which half a form can be produced. Thus, in their talk of parts, Cebes and Phaedrus betray their exclusive concern with content rather than with form. In other words, in order to recognise that only half a form has been produced Simmias', Cebes' understandings must already be in possession of that completed form, and so their understandings do not really want for that other half. However, Simmias and Cebes are clearly in want of something. In this way they show themselves to be unconcerned with form.
- ⁵ Also compare how Socrates in his *Republic* account of the perfect state presents something that appears to Glaucon to be contentfully incomplete.
- ⁶ Along with the nature of the soul Socrates also refuses to speak directly about Beauty (see *Phaedo* 100de) and the Good (see *Republic* 7.514+).
- ⁷ Throughout a number of dialogues, Plato represents a number of attempts to brutalise beauty. For example, consider how Glaucon insists that Socrates accommodate his complex conception of value in his account of the perfect state (*Republic* 2.372+). Glaucon asks Socrates to 'fill it with a multitude of things that go beyond what is necessary' (*Republic* 2.373b) and thus immediately threaten to destroy the economy of that beautiful form. Consider how Crito visits Socrates in prison with his scheme to lead Socrates to freedom (see *Crito*). In these instances and others, Plato in a sense rescues beauty from these kinds of violation. The beauty of Plato's completed dialogues thwarts those many attempts to violate the economy and autonomy of beauty. Plato subsumes those instances of ugliness within a greater completed (and so beautiful) form.
- ⁸ Here Plato gives us the tools to explain in an accommodating way something of the phenomenology of love. He enables us to make out the connection between on the one hand, our thinking of our beloved as perfect, and, on the other, that feeling of timelessness (the feeling that one has always known one's beloved even though one can remember the historically first meeting). For this feeling of timelessness (or this feeling of a necessary connection between oneself and one's beloved) results from the aesthetic completion (of a form) by one's understanding in one's appreciation or recognition of one's beloved as perfect or beautiful. There is an inner necessity or timelessness to this aesthetic form (rather than merely the historical connection between the ideal lovers made out in Aristophanes' myth — see *Symposium*).
- ⁹ The most obvious exception to this pattern is Alcibiades' *Symposium* speech. However, the most notable exception is Socrates himself. Undoubtedly, Socrates expresses backlove for the divine, and perhaps also for Parmenides.
- ¹⁰ This charge, is essentially the same one Meletus brings against Socrates (see *Apology* chapter). The passive understanding associates invention with deceit or error; such an understanding associates truth with mere receipt.

PART II

SIN

A tightrope walker does not allow himself to be braced in order to avoid falling; if he did so, he would be sure of his act, but he would no longer appear a skilful man.

Leibniz (letter to Countess Elizabeth)



Kierkegaard self-portrait (letter to Regine — unsent)

Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman — a rope over an abyss. A dangerous going across, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and standing still.

Zarathustra (Nietzsche)

INTRODUCTION

SUPPOSING METHOD MATTERS

Lost in the maze of London's streets a tourist stops and asks a boy at play if he knows where the Tower of London is. The boy replies: *Yes — but if I wanted to get there I wouldn't start from here.*¹

Method is unavoidable. In large part, our method determines the results of our inquiry. What we want however is for the subject of our enquiry to determine those results. In other words, we want our investigation to tell us something about our subject rather than for it merely to tell us something about our method.

Solving this problem requires that we use the method that in some sense suits or matches (rather than brutalizes) the form of the subject of our investigation; only in this way will we avoid inappropriately forcing a rule upon it. If we succeed in this respect, the determination of that method will happily reflect or reciprocate in our understanding the form of that subject.

However, we can never gain direct access to the nature of the subject of our investigation — for inquiry without method is impossible. We can only get a handle on the nature of the subject through a method. For there are no facts of which we can take hold independently from the determination of a particular method. Thus, any reflection on method will itself be methodologically laden (that is to say, any reflection on method will also employ a method). Consequently, is not clear how it is possible to be methodologically reflective without begging the question concerning what is most at issue in that enquiry.

In order practically to acknowledge the problem of method, we must be able to recognise unhappiness between our method of choice and the subject of inquiry. Clearly, some methods are far less likely to be frustrated in their progress than others. Consider the case of the misanthrope. His method (of suspicion) is negative and for this reason he does not have the resources to recognise what may positively lie in each subject of that determination. Thus, the determination of his method is hard to unsettle and it decides rather than discovers something with its judgements.

According to the story Thomas Kuhn tells, scientists are able to resolve this problem of method (see the *Kuhn* chapter). For, scientists qua practitioners have sorted out the nature of value: they assume that nature is unified.² Upon this assumption, practitioners subscribe to methods that offer the most promise of capturing that expectation of unity. However, method can still frustrate a practitioner's ultimate aim. According to Kuhn, when this happens scientists do not give up on that ruling assumption, they rather abandon their method for another that offers more promise. Only because their conception of value precedes or transcends their method can they detect unhappiness between the determination of their method and their assumption concerning the nature of nature.

However, in this respect scholarship in the history of ideas looks importantly different from the endeavour of scientists. For that assumption by the scientist regarding the nature of value, looks obviously question-begging in the case of scholarship — clearly some thinkers do not express or even seek to express a thoroughgoing unity in their works. Still, like the scientist, the scholar, who investigates those works, uses a method. And whatever method scholars use they presuppose a particular conception of value. That is to say, every method implicitly and unavoidably presupposes something about the nature of its object. Moreover, a modest method — one that avowedly does not assume a unity in its object — does not leave the nature of value as an open question (to be decided in the act of inquiry). Rather, an overly modest method is essentially nihilistic and so threatens to deny the possible nature of value manifest in the object.

It seems that the only way to escape the possible brutal progress of method is to assume the very best concerning the nature of our subject of inquiry. In this case, if our method illegitimately imposes something (in such a way that we cannot detect that determination) then

that determination will be charitable rather than brutal. At most it will threaten to collapse the distance between the *is* and the *ought* of the subject (or, what is presented and what is merely promised in the subject). Thus, if it misses the mark we will thereby make understandable what in reality falls short of that standard.

After this manner, Immanuel Kant thinks the very best of the nature of nature (see the *Kant* chapter). In thinking the best, he seeks to maximise meaning. However, Nancy Cartwright (who, in contrast to Kant's sublime understanding, possesses a beautiful understanding) can it seems accuse Kant of begging the question against her conception of value. Thus, from Cartwright's point of view, if the progress of Kant's method is illegitimate then rather than being charitable it is brutalising.

Cartwright however assumes a conception of value that cannot be frustrated. If we methodologically assume that nature is an aggregate then with that method we are incapable of recognising anything that can confuse that ruling assumption. Kant, perhaps rightly, subsumes the beautiful under the sublime understanding. From his perspective, the beautiful understanding cannot get its conception of value together. For when reason reflects upon itself to discover its own purpose (that is to say, when reason seeks to know itself), it will draw itself unavoidably into a sublime way of thinking; for it will reach out to grasp a totality (else reason gives up on itself — which it cannot do without at the same time undermining all of its endeavours). With this exercise, reason reveals to itself its own essential nature. Thus, Kant can rightly assert that the pursuit of unity is precisely what it is to reason. For, from the sublime point of view, it is our own conception of the necessary form of agency that gives that sublime method the warrant it needs. (Moreover, when Kant appeals to the noumenal as a means of reconciling competing but empirically incompatible understandings of nature, this move of his is likewise warranted. The beautiful understanding cannot secure a conception of agency; thus, it lacks a warrant to assert its own method over that of the sublime.)³

Kant does not reflect on his approach to Plato as much as he does on his approach to nature and agency. He fails to do Plato justice. With his reading of Plato, Kant's sublime understanding takes the lead and he allows it unfettered space in a way he does not allow that same faculty space when he applies it to nature. (Because of the determination of method) Plato does not frustrate the progress of Kant's sublime understanding, and so Kant is forced to conclude that Plato has a real problem. Thereby Kant assumes that Plato commits the sublime constructive sin that he (Kant) is so careful to avoid. It turns out that Kant commits that very sin in his reading of Plato. For rather than receiving blame, he projects it. Here Kant is inconsistent: he reads Plato as fanatical only because he allows his own sublime reading of Plato to go unchecked.

Thus, Kant does not really approach Plato thinking the best of him. Rather, he approaches Plato with the thought that it is himself (Kant), who delivers the stern corrective to the history of metaphysics.⁴ Thus, he approaches Plato as a metaphysician already assuming that Plato is in error.⁵ If, on the other hand, Kant had genuinely thought the best of Plato, that is, if he had assumed that Plato did not commit the metaphysician's sin (of allowing the sublime understanding to construct unchecked our understanding of the world) then Kant might well have discovered a thinker far more compatible with a portion of his own thought. However, in order to arrive at that conclusion, Kant would initially have had to shoulder the blame he projects onto Plato. Shouldering that blame, Kant would have had to alter his approach to Plato (see *Protagoras* chapter). In this way, Kant might have come to question his assumption that Plato is a theoretical-metaphysical rather than merely a practical-metaphysical thinker. Thereby, he may have freed his reading of Plato from that fanatical bent.

However, if we are to conclude that we must always assume an appropriate unity when we approach an object (that is to say, if we are to assume that meaning can only be communicated indirectly), then at first glance we seem to assume too much. For, such an assumption seems quite inappropriate when we approach thinkers like David Hume. A beautiful understanding it seems could rightly charge that we would, wielding that assumption, brutalise Hume. Perhaps this worry is misplaced. For, if our expectation of unity in our reading of Hume is not completely frustrated (which it might well be) then it will most likely

discover Hume to be a supreme ironist, who lays out a reductio on the empiricist's method. A beautiful understanding's reading may disagree with the sublime understanding's overall conclusion (that Hume is running a reductio), but it is less clear that such an understanding will thereby find fault with those considerations of Hume that led the sublime understanding to that conclusion. The beautiful understanding will just deny that final sublime move.

This is not to deny that a beautiful understanding cannot lay hold of that same reading of Hume (sans, the reductio conclusion); it is just to suggest that, in the case of Hume, the beautiful understanding's method will find a happy match. That kind of match is not so happy with its consideration of other thinkers such as Plato. Moreover, that method will fail to recognise that unhappiness. Thus, in such cases the beautiful understanding will unwittingly brutalise the subject of its enquiry.

NOTES

¹ Source unknown.

² This reading of Kuhn is perhaps a little idiosyncratic and it cannot be gathered merely from his main work, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. However, given what he says in the later essay *Reflections on My Critics*, such a reading can be constructed retrospectively over that prior work. In that later work, he takes issue with those commentators who characterise him as an irrationalist and relativist. He makes his escapes from those epithets by suggesting that our conception of what it is to be rational must change to fall in with what he describes as occurring during scientific revolutions. Perhaps the best way to make sense of this claim is to connect this supposedly revisionist conception of rationality to the synthetic, aesthetic or unifying activity of reason. In the *Structure* Kuhn seems to associate rationality exclusively with the analytic use of reason (see Kuhn chapter). Thus, with reflection, Kuhn establishes a conception of value (which attaches to scientists qua practitioners) that at least coincides with, or is manifest in, those methodological decisions — even if strictly speaking it does not appear prior to those decisions or their practices.

³ None of this will persuade the beautiful understanding. For, when such an understanding reflects upon reason its method essentially constructs an opposite nature for reason. The beautiful understanding will be tempted to construct a history (e.g. a Darwinian explanation) for that faculty that prevents it having anything of that nature the sublime understanding attributes to it. Reason, according to the beautiful understanding, is essentially instrumental or analytic rather than inventive (Hume, for example, characterises reason as a slave). (Because of its understanding of the essential nature of reason the sublime understanding must deny such a history for itself.)

⁴ The suggestion here is not that it might have been Plato rather than Kant who was the first to offer this corrective to the sublime understanding. Rather, the suggestion is: if we read Plato as a metaphysician only insofar as he gives himself warrant to make metaphysical conclusions through his consideration of practical concepts then he fails to commit the endemic sin of the metaphysician with which Kant takes issue in the first *Critique*.

⁵ This reading of what Kant is up to is perhaps a little harsh. In a sense, given Kant's overall purpose, his reading of Plato is justified. For, even if Plato is not guilty of the incontinence of reason of which Kant accuses him, it is nevertheless true that many subsequent thinkers in the history of philosophy have assumed Kant's reading of Plato. Thus, Kant's perhaps unwarranted criticism of Plato turns out to be a justified criticism of one branch of the subsequent history of philosophy.

KRAUT
SUPPOSING PLATO TO BE ARTLESS

1.1 HISTORY OF INDEBTEDNESS AND INDEBTEDNESS TO HISTORY 62
1.2 ARISTOTLE AND PRIVELEGING CONTEMPORANEOUS AUTHORITY..... 62
1.3 PRIVILEGING THE ARTIST'S INTERPRETATION AND THE ARTIST'S SILENCE 63
1.4 PLATO AS ARGUER AND PLATO AS ARTIST..... 63
NOTES..... 66

1.1 HISTORY OF INDEBTEDNESS AND INDEBTEDNESS TO HISTORY

The history of western philosophy is undoubtedly indebted to Plato, and, at least from a particular perspective, the nature of that indebtedness seems clear. Richard Kraut for example suggests that Plato ‘invented philosophy as a distinct subject’ and gave it ‘a distinctive intellectual method’ (*Companion* p. 1). However, to understand this indebtedness may not be to understand Plato. Kraut and others appear to conflate these two questions. Kraut seems to suppose that the way to understand Plato is precisely through appreciating something of the history of philosophy’s indebtedness to him. Consequently, he unquestioningly takes Plato to be a direct communicator.

1.2 ARISTOTLE AND PRIVELEGING CONTEMPORANEOUS AUTHORITY

For the last twenty years of Plato's life, Aristotle was a member of Plato's Academy. For this reason, most, if not all, scholars of ancient philosophy assume that there was a close connection between Aristotle and Plato. Kraut and Terence Irwin, both justify their approaches to Plato by appealing to Aristotle’s reading (cf. e.g. pp. 4 ff., 23). Irwin suggests that ‘[i]n deciding how to take the dialogues, our most important witness is Aristotle’ (p. 77). He continues:

we should follow Aristotle in believing that the arguments and conclusions of the Platonic Socrates (and other main speakers) generally represent the views of Plato. (p. 77)

Undoubtedly, in some respects, Aristotle did have a privileged perspective on Plato. After all, he largely shares both a culture and a history with Plato. This alone does seem sufficient to make him an ‘important witness’ to something about Plato. However, this type of familiarity is not of itself sufficient to guarantee an appropriate appreciation of Plato’s creative works.

If Aristotle does rightly understand Plato’s works then he brings something to his understanding in addition to the aforementioned familiarity. For to consider cultural and historical familiarity sufficient for such an understanding, is to suppose that great works are merely products of their times rather than quite peculiar artefacts that in some sense transcend the circumstances of their invention. To assume that even the greatest works are merely products is precisely to deny that those works are genuinely creative and thus it is essentially to deny their greatness. Consequently, such an assumption begs an important question against the nature of those works.

Because there is at least the possibility of something unprecedented (that is to say, genuinely new rather than merely recombined) about great works, we cannot automatically trust contemporaneous thinkers to deliver appropriate interpretations. If Aristotle is an authority, he needs to show himself as such.

Plato, Xenophon and Aristophanes’ very different characterisations of Socrates show that historical proximity is not sufficient to arbitrate a veridical perspective. Ranking Aristophanes, Plato and Xenophon according to their relative calibre will not help. For even if we rightly judge that Plato is the most gifted, this of itself gives us no reason to conclude that his portrayal of Socrates is the most historically reliable. Quite the opposite conclusion might be more consistent with that assessment of calibre. The list of interesting mis-readings of great thinkers by great thinkers threatens to be as long as the list of great thinkers who interpret other people’s works. Such mis-readings are not without value; we cannot however merely assume that their true worth lies in their veracity.

Because Aristotle, like Plato, is a giant he may not offer a reliable reading of Plato. For, giants create their own perspectives. This very feature of their endeavour marks them off as great and in a sense it separates them off from, rather than draws them closer to, other giants.¹ Aristotle as a direct communicator and a direct communicator obsessed with taxonomies and classifications may do to Plato what he does to nature. Aristotle's own contribution to the history of ideas may thus colour his readings of Plato.

1.3 PRIVILEGING THE ARTIST'S INTERPRETATION AND THE ARTIST'S SILENCE

In order to justify privileging Aristotle as an exegetical authority on Plato's dialogues, we need to assume that Plato confided something to him regarding the nature of his authorship. Perhaps Irwin and Kraut assume that Plato must have spoken about his works to Aristotle (or to someone else with whom Aristotle had contact). However, that assumption begs an important question regarding the nature of Plato's authorship. For if we assume that Plato must have explained his works to others we essentially do one of two things: either we merely assume that his works are works of direct communication or we impugn Plato's character.

We could expect Plato to explain his works if we already have reason to suppose that those works are works in direct communication. However, if those works do not involve direct communication then there is every reason to suppose that he would remain silent concerning their nature (or, at least that his communication regarding them would coincide with the spirit of the type of communication of those works). For, if he did speak directly about his indirect communication, he would effectively undermine the work of his dialogues (see *Apology* and *Phaedrus* chapters). Artists, to avoid destroying the autonomy (i.e., the communication) of their works, must not undermine that economy with commentary.²

That is to say, if his works are works of indirect communication then we have every reason to think that his utterances about his works will also be indirect and thus unhelpful in directly securing the hearer of those utterances as an authority. If Plato is an artist then an understanding of history or culture cannot arbitrate an appropriate reading of those works. We must approach his dialogues as if they are their own authority.

Thus, to assume that Plato must have spoken in a direct way to Aristotle concerning his works is merely to assume from the outset that those works are works in direct communication. That is to say, to take Aristotle to be the best authority is already to assume the methodological veracity of Aristotle's own direct approach. To avoid this vicious circularity of justification we cannot use what Aristotle says to decide the question regarding the direct or indirect nature of Plato communication. The fact that Aristotle reads Plato as a direct communicator may just as well reveal how consistent Plato's communication was and not that that communication must be for that reason direct.

1.4 PLATO AS ARGUER AND PLATO AS ARTIST

Kraut summarily rejects the call to interpret Plato as an artist (i.e., as an indirect communicator). However, he premises this rejection upon a cynical reading of the nature of art. Kraut assumes that artistic expression is merely a corruption of direct communication. In this respect, he looks surprisingly close to Plato's characterisation of Protagoras (see *Protagoras* chapter). Protagoras uses his reason in a merely analytical way. Accordingly, he conceives of communication as essentially direct; and the artist as merely a surreptitious direct communicator rather than an indirect communicator.

Because their method is reductive, at best analytic philosophers struggle to secure any measure of autonomy for artistic expression. Hume for example, connects our possible appreciation of beauty with 'a delicacy of taste' (*Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion* p. 2). He compares this judgement

to a clock or watch, where the most ordinary machine is sufficient to tell the hours; but the most elaborate alone can point out the minutes and seconds, and distinguish the smallest difference in time (p. 5)³

According to his method, which subjectivizes beauty, Hume concludes:

[b]eauty is no quality in things themselves: it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. ... To seek the

real beauty ... is as fruitless an inquiry, as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter. (*Of the Standard of Taste*, p. 252)

Kraut is in that same philosophical tradition and methodology as Hume and he seems to start on the right foot. Regarding artistic expression, he correctly judges that in works of art we cannot assume to be directly hearing the author's voice. He suggests:

when we read the plays of Sophocles or Euripides, we all recognise that what the characters say need not represent the beliefs of the author. (*Companion* p. 25)

However, he misjudges the reason why we do not straightforwardly hear the artist's voice. Kraut essentially denies the artist a voice. He observes:

Plato's works are not written to be entered into competition and performed at civic religious festivals, as were the plays of Greek tragedians and comedians.

He concludes:

Plato is not assigning lines to his speakers in order to compose a work that would be considered beautiful or emotionally satisfying by official judges or an immense audience. ... [Thus,] if Plato's aims differ from those of the dramatist, then he will have a reason that the dramatist lacks for using the main speakers as a mouthpiece for his own convictions. (p. 25)

To the end of creating a case for reading Plato as a direct communicator Kraut's comparison is, at best, question begging.⁴ He (along with Hume) assumes that the artist must be merely trying to produce an effect rather than inviting something more cognitive or autonomous.

Within his summary rejection, Kraut seeks to dismiss Leo Strauss' reading of Plato (see pp. 25 and 42 fn.72). Strauss observes:

[i]f someone quotes a passage from the dialogues in order to prove that Plato held such and such a view, he acts about as reasonably as if he were to assert that according to Shakespeare life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. (*The City and Man* p. 50)

From Kraut's perspective, Strauss' approach must seem extreme, needlessly complicated and potentially fruitless; for, Strauss seems to offer no real method (i.e., no easy rule in light of which to arbitrate meaning).⁵ He merely seems to seek to deprive analytic philosophers like Kraut of their straightforward method. If this kind of worry about meaning is what motivates Kraut, then his final position is founded on a misunderstanding.

Nevertheless, Kraut would be right in thinking that there is no prior rule that can decide an artist's meaning. However, it does not follow that nothing can decide that meaning. For, even though an authoritative voice cannot precede a work of art it does not follow that the work can offer no authority. Because Kraut assumes that meaning must be reductive, he fails to entertain the possibility that an aesthetic criterion may arbitrate competing interpretations. Kraut need not deny Plato as an artist in order to hold onto Plato as a philosopher; he just needs to rethink his understanding of what makes artists artists and philosophers philosophers (i.e., he must recognise Plato's work as the solution to that ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry — see *Republic* chapter).

Kraut does not engage with Strauss' example of Shakespeare. Perhaps he thinks: *because of that escape of history that separates Plato and Shakespeare, Sophocles and Euripides are more fitting counterparts to Plato than is Shakespeare.* Kraut may reason: *if the claim is that Plato ought to be regarded as a dramatist then surely the best test of this is to compare him with some of those whom Plato himself recognises as dramatists (cf. Phaedrus 286c, 269a).* For a presumption, if not a convenience, threatens if scholars, such as Strauss, try to project onto the activity of Plato more modern conceptions of what may constitute drama.

If this is the type of thinking lying behind Kraut's substitution (of Sophocles and Euripides for Shakespeare) then he threatens a presumption of his own. For, to assume that the more appropriate comparison is between Plato and contemporaneous dramatists is already potentially to assume the case against him as an artist. For with that assumption, he would thereby suppose that the appropriate criteria for distinguishing artists from non-artists are adequately captured by the cultural norms (regarding the nature of art) of the time in question.

If this is his thinking, then Kraut threatens to eliminate precisely those artists that do most to redefine or extend the nature of art. Thereby Kraut threatens stipulatively to define art by excluding the greatest artists.

Kraut fails to entertain the possibility that artists in some way are creators of culture. For he cannot expect artists to be both creators of culture and recognised as artists by their own cultures. The greatest artists are only able to achieve a measure of timelessness in their work by working themselves free from what is merely given within their own cultures. The creative nature of art constantly threatens predominant, or received, conceptions of art. Some artists quite self-consciously challenge those received norms in their own works. In other words, they go out artistically to defy the received conventions of artistic expression. Plato does this (see *Republic* chapter); he seeks to settle an ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry by creating a new (artistic) form.

What is most at issue between those who follow the general methodological approach of Kraut and those who have sympathies with Strauss is not really the issue of whether or not Plato uses 'the main speakers as a mouthpiece for his own convictions', rather, the issue concerns the question: what is it to be a mouthpiece? Resolving this question demands an enquiry into the possible variety of conviction concerning the meaning of meaning and how these will influence a conception of what it is genuinely to communicate. Thus, what it is to be a mouthpiece for a particular conviction, depends on the nature of that conviction. If, for example, the conviction is that all telling in addition to a showing is gratuitous, ugly, or impious, then to be a mouthpiece for this position is methodologically quite different from what it is to be a mouthpiece for a reductionist take on meaning (cf. *Apology* chapter). Again, if the conviction is that what is understood cannot directly be spoken or what is directly spoken cannot be understood, then this conviction demands an indirect mode of communication (see *Phaedrus* chapter). Again, the conviction that with genuine communication one must show something complete rather than merely tell something, also demands an indirect mode of communication. This is all just to say, we may not be able to adequately appreciate the difference between mouthpieces merely by considering what they say. If there is a philosophically and artistically interesting difference, it will be found primarily in the respective forms of their communication.

Kraut seems to be unreflective about this possible methodological distinction and assumes that to be a mouthpiece is quite simply to be a direct communicator. Thus, he is dangerously conservative when he claims:

[o]ur best chance to understand Plato is ... to begin with the assumption that in each dialogue he uses his principal interlocutor to support or oppose certain conclusions by means of certain arguments because he, Plato, supports or opposes those conclusions for those reasons. (*Companion*, p. 29)⁶

In this final assessment, Kraut again presupposes more than he tells us. If methodologically he has not decided what may and may not count as an argument then there may not be much of an issue here (that is to say, he may escape begging some quite fundamental questions about Plato's form of communication even before he starts reading him). However, Kraut brings to his reading of the dialogues his own idea about what counts as good argument. He does not let Plato reveal anything new to him in this respect. Thus, he approaches the dialogues already confidently assuming something quite fundamental about the form of their delivery. For this reason, his rule of interpretation is perniciously conservative; for with the above claim, Kraut essentially supposes he already knows what philosophy is before picking up Plato. That is to say, he supposes that Plato has nothing to teach him. That implicit assumption, or conceit, eliminates the possibility of Plato proving him wrong.

Kraut's assumption makes Plato scholarship unproblematic, but, at the same time, Plato ultimately comes off looking shabby. For, upon that assumption, Kraut and scholars like him cannot sufficiently explain why Plato chooses the method of communication he uses (e.g., Kraut cannot adequately explain why Plato uses the dialogue form or why he repeatedly uses Socrates within that form etc.). Scholars such as Kraut thus arbitrarily separate off the content

from the form of communication; in turn, they discard the form. In so doing, they implicitly deny that Plato is interested in the nature of communication, and so they fail to entertain the possibility of a (necessary) connection between Plato's metaphysics and the form of his communication.

NOTES

¹ This is Catton's observation (related in conversation).

² If artists are to remain artists, they must remain silent on the nature of their work. Hitchcock was a consummate artist. In order to preserve the integrity or autonomy of his work, and because he needed so many other people to fall in with his plans, he had to play a sophisticated game in order to avoid inartistic direct communication.

[Kim Novak early on in the filming of *Vertigo*] raised a question about some aspect of the way her role was written: might it not be better if the character's inner motivation was brought out by changing this line or extending that? Hitch replied simply, 'Kim, this is only a movie. Let's not go too deeply into these things. It's only a movie.' (*Hitch* p. 241)

Here in order to preserve the integrity of his work, and to keep his actor happy without having to spell stuff out to her in an inartistic way, Hitchcock feigns imperfection in order to more properly aim at perfection. Even though Novak worked with Hitchcock and even though she had many discussions with him, it would be a mistake to receive her possible commentary as automatically authoritative. We may have reason to assume a historical accuracy, but we should not conflate the possible deliverances of memory for what demands interpretation.

As a further example of an archetypal artist's relation with his work, consider Kierkegaard: one day he began writing as if he were many men and continued that way until he completed a shelf of works. In those pseudonymous works, Kierkegaard described the world from the perspective of each work's hypothetical author. Those authors he fashioned as exemplars for radically different forms of life: an aesthete seducer of young women, a man committed to the dutiful existence of marriage and a religious soul who is tempted by the ethical.

During the daylight hours, which prefaced each night's furious writing, Kierkegaard wandered the streets of Copenhagen conversing with everyone he met; frequently he stopped off and idled the hours away smoking cigars in coffee houses. With his wanderings, he laid his alibi.

Each evening, he would break from his prodigious efforts and attend the intermission at the opera. When the other patrons returned to enjoy the performance, he would steal himself away and return to his writing. In addition, in order to help remove any possible suspicion that he might have somehow found time to author other people's works, he would publish a number of works under his own name when he published his pseudonymous works. For example in 1843 he published six works: under his own name, he published three volumes of sermons entitled *Edifying Discourses*. Under pseudonyms, he published the double volumes of *Either/Or*, along with *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition* (see *Kierkegaard*, p. 89). To all appearances, that man, who died at the age of forty-two, who wrote more than anyone could expect a single man to write, lived a life of leisure (see *Kierkegaard*, p. 88). Kierkegaard went to an extraordinary length to preserve the autonomy of his works.

It seems that Kierkegaard developed his extraordinary sense of duty (together with his ability to slip into other people's shoes) through his quite extraordinary education. When Kierkegaard was sent to school his father gave him but a single task to accomplish. Moreover, during his schooling his father made no enquiries of Kierkegaard concerning his work or his progress — he just left him with that single task: to come third in the class.

- ³ Elsewhere, Hume re-emphasizes this appreciation through sensitivity to the base ingredients of a thing. He states:

[w]here the organs are so fine as to allow nothing to escape them, and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition, this we call delicacy of taste ... (Of the Standard of Taste p. 258)

Hume notes the story told by *Don Quixote's* Sancho (see pp. 257+). Sancho (explaining his own nose for good wine) tells a story concerning the fine taste of his relatives. He explains how one of his relatives could discern the taste of leather and another the taste of iron in the same cask of wine. Because their descriptions were so different, they were roundly ridiculed. However, they both turned out to be correct. For, when the cask was finally drained a key with a leather strap was found lying at its base.

Hume's point is that even though he connects our appreciation of beauty to taste, and even though tastes and the fineness of taste differ, there is still a meaningful sense in which the bearer of taste can justify his or her judgements. However, that justification takes on a particular reductive form.

Kant rescues beauty from the subjectivity of taste and from Hume's reductionism. That rescue on the one hand makes out how our appreciation can be cognitive and on the other hand why reason giving might be insufficient to get a handle on beauty. In relation to *Don Quixote*, Hume latches onto Sancho the servant's slavish conception of value; Kant, on the other hand, makes sense of Don Quixote's masterful conception of value; that conception emphasises form rather than mere ingredients or content.

- ⁴ Kraut makes an odd qualification when he differentiates the supposed motivations of Sophocles and Euripides from Plato's motivation. It may well be true that Plato, unlike Sophocles and Euripides, does not aim at the mere appearance of beauty, but that does not mean that Plato does not aim at beauty. The latter rather than the former claim is what Kraut's argument needs. However, if Kraut had phrased his argument referring to beauty in the way Plato would refer to it then his case looks quite ridiculous (i.e., sophistical). Thus, Kraut's justification of his reading of Plato turns out to be thoroughly unPlatonic.
- ⁵ Kraut asserts that if we do not take Plato's voice to be direct we have no grounds for eliminating any reading of the dialogues (see *Companion* p. 29). In order to provide a plausible argument for this claim Kraut would have to be far more methodologically reflective than he shows himself to be. However, that kind of reflection would soon betray the poverty of his claim.
- ⁶ Irwin in places makes more general and more benign claims. For example, he suggests that 'no internal or external evidence gives us any good reason whatever for denying that the dialogues express Plato's own philosophical views' (*Companion* p. 88). Here Irwin seems to leave as an open question the nature of that expression — that is, until he makes the more determinate assertion that Plato's views are unproblematically expressed 'by the leading speakers in the dialogues' (p. 78).

RYLE

SUPPOSING PLATO TO BE CONFUSED

2.1 REDUCTIONISM AND ELIMINATIVISM.....	68
2.1 ANAXAGORAS AND PLATO SCHOLARSHIP	68
2.2 PHILOSOPHY AS CONCEPTUAL PORNOGRAPHY AND PHILOSOPHY AS LOGICAL GEOGRAPHY	68
2.3 CATEGORY MISTAKES AND CONCEPTUAL BLINDNESS	69
2.4 UNADVENTUROUS METHODS AND UNADVENTUROUS SUBJECTS.....	71
2.5 HISTORICAL EXPLANATIONS AND THE STRUCTURE OF MEANING	71
NOTES.....	73

2.1 REDUCTIONISM AND ELIMINATIVISM

Methodologically, Gilbert Ryle is a precursor to Kraut and Irwin; and he shows where their types of exegetical assumptions lead. Because he assumes that philosophy is only where arguments are, Ryle concludes that much of the content of some dialogues, and, in other cases, entire dialogues, are either philosophically benign or philosophical irrelevant. Clearly, (conceptually) before picking up the dialogues, Ryle has already decided what philosophy is; and he does not let his reading of those works disabuse him of that confidence. However, because of this assumption, he fails adequately to explain the dialogue form: that is to say, he fails to make out a necessary connection between the form and content of Plato's communication. His assumptions make Plato look shabby. Ryle asserts:

[t]here is no philosophy in the *Menexenus*, the *Apology* or the *Critias*; almost no philosophy in the *Laws*, except for Book X, or in the first six speeches of the *Symposium*; and almost none in the *Phaedrus*. The *Republic* is a mixed bag ...
(*Encyclopedia* 6.319)

Even before considering the worth of alternative approaches, this eliminative consequence of the analytic approach should be sufficient reason for us to eliminate it as an exegetical contender. Ryle's reading does not so much tell us what Plato thought about philosophy; rather, it quite explicitly tells us what Ryle thinks about it.

2.1 ANAXAGORAS AND PLATO SCHOLARSHIP

Ryle's elimination of entire dialogues as philosophical uninteresting betrays him as methodologically unreflective. Plato, in contrast, is primarily concerned with method. Within the dialogues Plato shows Socrates' interlocutors interpreting Socrates, nature, the poets, and a raft of concepts in a particular way. For example: Meletus, Cebes and Simmias interpret Socrates in the way Anaxagoras reads the nature of Mind (see *Apology* and *Phaedo* chapters); after the same method, Protagoras reads the poet Simonides (see *Protagoras* chapter), Lysias' reads the nature of love (see *Phaedrus* chapter), Euthyphro reads the nature of piety (see *Euthyphro* chapter), Cephalus, Polemarch, Thrasymachus, Glaucon and Adeimantus read the nature of value (see *Republic* chapter). Socrates consistently takes issue with his interlocutors' approach. Here, there is an implicit but clear warning by Plato to his readers: he warns us not to make this same type of mistake in reading the meaning of the dialogues. We are not to read Plato, for example, in the way that Meletus reads Socrates; for, in doing so, we essentially kill Socrates (and Plato) (see *Apology* chapter).

Broadly speaking, the method, which Socrates repeatedly takes to task, is analytical and reductive. Proponents of that method assume that meaning is given rather than gathered; and that communication is direct rather than indirect. The interlocutors with whom Socrates takes issue are talkers rather than practitioners.

2.2 PHILOSOPHY AS CONCEPTUAL PORNOGRAPHY AND PHILOSOPHY AS LOGICAL GEOGRAPHY

In his *The Concept of Mind* Ryle explains what he thinks it is to do philosophy. He portrays philosophy as 'the replacement of category-habits with category-disciplines' (*Mind* p. 10); and he imbues that work's description of itself with that same philosophical modesty. He explains:

[t]he philosophical arguments which constitute this book are intended not to increase what we know about minds, but to rectify the logical geography of the logical knowledge we already possess. (p. 9)

Ryle's repeated metaphorical characterization of his project as a work in 'logical geography' is apt. Logic, in this sense, refers merely to the study of the analytical function of reason. Geography is the study of the surface features of the world, together with an analysis of how geographical elements sit in relation to each other. As a geographical philosopher, Ryle is not interested in challenging the elements of the philosophical terrain; these he takes as given. Ryle rather concerns himself with setting those elements in their appropriate conceptual place. The following declaration epitomizes Ryle's analytical, geographical approach:

[t]o explode a [philosophical] myth is ... not to deny the facts but to re-allocate them. And this is what I am trying to do. (p. 10)

Philosophical puzzles arise, according to Ryle, because of our 'inability to use certain terms in the English vocabulary' (p. 19). Thus, solving puzzles merely involves re-allocating facts to arrive at an appropriate logical structure. Because of the primacy of the facts to that structure, this re-allocation will result in an account bearing only a thin measure of coherence. According to Ryle, the philosopher has much in common with the historian. Ryle explains:

[t]he historian, having assembled a mass of relevant facts, has to think before he can give a coherent account of his campaign; but the coherence of his final account is a unity of quite a different kind from that of a chain of theorems. His account will contain a lot of inferences and it must be free from inconsistencies ... (p. 294)

Ryle thus conceives of facts as conceptually prior to the story that they combine to tell. According to this account, historians arrange their set of given elements so that historically earlier facts can be understood causally to explain later facts. Such an arrangement or logical structure preserves the integrity of those original facts. Once historians have arranged all the facts so that no fact lacks a causal history, they will have a coherent story. Such an historical understanding of events is essentially mechanical. The end of such an account is a consistent story rather than a story exhibiting organic unity. It is a type of account that emphasizes change.¹ Ryle's choice of method essentially assumes and thus decides that there are no genuine wholes in the world. For, in order for Ryle to admit that there are wholes he must admit that facts are not always given (but must in some cases be gathered).

2.3 CATEGORY MISTAKES AND CONCEPTUAL BLINDNESS

In the opening pages of *Mind*, Ryle describes what he means by a category mistake (i.e., the logical misplacement of a concept). He provides a number of simple examples of possible misuses of the concepts 'university', 'division' and 'team-spirit' (pp. 17-19). Even though these examples are rather crude and artificial, they are by no means barren; for, they sharply reveal the blindness of Ryle's method.

Ryle is well aware that these examples are contrived. Consequently, he assumes he has all his readers onboard when he offers his solutions. For this reason, he does not bother to defend what turn out to be methodologically question-begging replies. From a particular vantage point, Ryle's stated corrections are no less wrong-headed than the fanciful errors they supposedly rectify. Because, Ryle does not entertain this other perspective, he shows himself to be methodologically unreflective.

The hypothetical person, whom Ryle posits to commit the category mistake, is a geographer like himself. From Ryle's perspective, the only difference between himself and this fanciful creature is that the latter is a geographer who makes a typological slip in a place where Ryle does not. Thus, with his examples of category mistakes, Ryle offers no real methodological contrast. Ryle simply does not recognise any other way of doing philosophy than by his geographical method (all other supposedly different methods — or, from his perspective, different takes on the terrain — still necessarily involve the doing of geography, but just the doing of it in a wrong way). Thus, precisely because he only recognises his foes as typological blunderers, Ryle turns out to be methodologically blundering. He fails to recognise

that competing methods need not merely contrast different ways of doing geography, but some methods may tacitly question the appropriateness of the geographical method.

Ryle's final example of 'team-spirit' brings to the surface something lurking not far beneath his earlier examples. In that example, Ryle first explains a possible misuse of that term. He suggests that we make a logical error in our employment of the term 'team-spirit' if we see it as another operation teammates do in addition to catching, kicking, etc. Ryle's correction to this muddle is interesting: he suggests that team-spirit is 'roughly, the keenness with which each of the special tasks is performed, and performing a task keenly is not performing two tasks' (p. 18).

Ryle's geographical perspective determines him to see teams as merely the sum of their given members. Thus, the way he arrives at his conception of 'team-spirit' from his separate understandings of 'team member' and 'spiritedness' is mechanical: he merely distributes 'spiritedness' over the elements of a team. According to such a perspective, the players are what are most basic to a team; conversely, there is something non-basic about a team. A team is a geographical relation of facts rather than it being a fact itself. According to Ryle's method, this geographical relation must preserve the nature of what is most basic to, or what is conceptually prior to, that relation. From his perspective, it is the facts that are basic to relations, not relations that are basic to facts. Thus, Ryle's method prevents him from entertaining the possibility that a whole may condition the nature of its parts. For the whole, according to Ryle, is merely arrived at through the appropriate placement of those parts. However, this way of rendering the terrain eliminates the possibility of team-spirit as anything other than individual-spirit. Thus, Ryle does not sufficiently accommodate the role of the team in the nature of 'team-spirit'. That is to say, he cannot conceive of how a player who is individually spirited can at the same time completely lack team-spirit.

Correctly understood, a player will have team-spirit if and only if her keenness is directed at goals not attached merely to herself qua individual at the exclusion of those aspirations of the team. In some cases, the dictates of team-spirit and individual-spirit will be at odds; in such cases, if team-spirit is ascribed to players, those players must sacrifice their own goals to those of the team. There is thus something about a player exhibiting team-spirit that cannot be found as a fact before the greater whole of the team is secured. Here, Ryle's geographical method, which seeks to preserve the givenness of facts rather than determine or gather facts, is insufficient to the task. With team-spirit, the whole (i.e., the team) is prior to the nature of its parts. For, with team-spirit the team is greater than the product of merely its spirited members. Team-spirit transforms a mere aggregate of (perhaps spirited) players into an organic unity of players. Thus, the accurate ascription of this concept, presupposes a conditioning of a player by the whole of which that player is a part, namely the team. Thus, in this case, facts are not prior to a gathering.

Ryle has the same problem with his earlier example of 'university.' He states:

[t]he University [Oxford or Cambridge] is just the way in which all that what
[we] have already seen [the colleges, the laboratories and offices] is organized.
(p. 18)

However, if we take the meaning of those colleges, laboratories and offices as already given quite independent to the whole they form, we overlook how the meaning of those colleges, laboratories and offices is in fact conditioned by the meaning of the whole that is the university. The meaning of a university is prior to the contingent elements Ryle identifies. It is the meaning of university that determines the nature and meaning of those elements, not vice versa.

Because of the way it prioritises parts to wholes Ryle's method only produces adequate results when it deals with mere aggregates. It captures for example the unhealthiness of unhealthy marriages, the sickness of sick societies and the deficiency of unhappy families; however, his method cannot get a handle on healthy counterparts to these. This is a problem, for the healthy exemplars are the very standards from which we judge their aberrant counterparts as aberrant. Thus, the eliminativism that results from Ryle's geographical method

unwittingly involves a form of nihilism and thus it turns out to be unable to judge its own worth(lessness).

While he hardly refers to Plato in *Mind*, Ryle's brief mention of him is methodologically revealing:

[t]he commentator on Plato's philosophy need not possess much philosophic originality, but if he cannot, as too many commentators cannot, appreciate the force, drift or motive of a philosophical argument, his comments will be worthless. (pp. 53-54)

The direct consequence of this conception of the modest commentator is the depiction, or determination, of a modest subject. Ryle's judgment concerning the worthlessness of anything unconnected to argument is merely his expression of his geographical view of philosophical objects. For, it is not the elements of that geography that philosophy reveals but merely their logic. Thus, the commentator's role is not so much to discover facts but to lay bare the logical connection between facts. Arguments explicitly detail this typological relation between the geographical elements of philosophy. Thus, from this methodological vantage point he is able to say: where there are no arguments, there is no philosophy.

2.4 UNADVENTUROUS METHODS AND UNADVENTUROUS SUBJECTS

If we believe that philosophy concerns itself with revealing or gathering facts, then Ryle's take on that discipline is overly modest. For, that modesty threatens to cloak rather than uncover what is original to great works in philosophy. His modesty as a commentator demands and secures a similar modesty in his subjects. Because of this, Ryle has a very narrow conception of the didactic nature of philosophy. He believes that the discerning reader and the writer tread the same geographical path (cf. p. 54). The reader mechanically follows something marked out by the writer. Philosophers tell their audience what dots to connect. The logically acute reader, in turn, joins those dots. There is something philosophically unadventurous and unchallenging in this characterization of following, in the same way that there is something philosophically transparent about the moves made by the philosopher. The writer and the reader are doing something the same. Thus, Ryle must conclude that the communication between them is quite direct. Thus, according to Ryle:

didactic discourse is impersonal and untropical, in the sense that the lessons it delivers could be delivered by any suitably trained teacher to any suitably prepared recipient. (p. 293)

From this perspective, Plato's use of Socrates throughout most of the dialogues is philosophical uninteresting and arbitrary. Socrates is merely a placeholder. Accordingly, Ryle is also determined to dismiss as philosophically gratuitous both Plato's choice of the dialogue form, and all those elements within the dialogues that connect to the dialogues' being dialogues rather than with their merely being the unadorned presentation of arguments.

Ryle explains the presence of all these philosophically uninteresting elements in Plato's works by assuming that Plato taught elenctic argument and that his dialogues fall somewhere into that teaching practice. Plato's extant production, in Ryle's view, is more a recording, to facilitate another recording, than an origination. The dialogues are thus didactic discourses, 'intended to be remembered, imitated and rehearsed by the recipient' (cf. *Mind* p. 292; contrast the *Phaedo* chapter).² He conjectures that Plato's

dialectical dialogues should be read as case-books of recent Moots, dramatized partly to help students remember and digest the argument-sequences that finally crystallized out of these Moots. (*Progress* p. 18, also cf., *Encyclopedia* 6.317)³

Here, Ryle creates a history that, in a mechanical way, explains why the dialogues have precisely those elements that they exhibit. However, there is no necessity in this explanation. This form of explanation avoids philosophy.

2.5 HISTORICAL EXPLANATIONS AND THE STRUCTURE OF MEANING

Ryle's lack of interest in necessity (or genuine unity) shows itself when he explains the elements of any particular dialogue. From Ryle's initial assumption, about the nature, bounds

and possible expression of philosophy, further disunities naturally cascade and envelope much of the content of Plato's works. These disunities do not preclude Ryle from securing a consistent story, but this consistency gets him nowhere close to preserving the object of his enquiry as unified.

Ryle's brief summary of two elements within the *Phaedo* serve to show how his assumptions locate unities or variety in the parts and do not push him to unify the meaning of those parts. Rather his methodological assumptions serve to frustrate the possibility of such unification. He observes:

[i]n the *Phaedo* Socrates is made to declare his personal renunciation of natural science and his resultant recourse to conceptual enquires. With surprising inconsistency he almost concludes his conversation with an exposition of "someone's" geophysical theories about the spherical shape and the internal structure of the earth, about its hydraulics and about the causes of volcanoes and earthquakes. Parts of this geophysics belong to the real period well after the death of the real Socrates, so the passage is likely to record things that Plato had newly learned at about the time he completed *Phaedo*. (*Encyclopedia* 6.324)

Ryle does not attempt to transcend the apparent tension between those elements he observes within the *Phaedo*. He does not go on to tell a more encompassing story about the meaning of the dialogue as a whole. Rather, he uncovers a *prima facie* inconsistency (between on the one hand Socrates' renunciation of natural science and on the other his proffering of a geophysical theory about the world) and he rests content with that. That is to say, he settles for multiplicity rather than unity of meaning (see *Protagoras* chapter). In a sense he is happy to conclude that Plato is ridiculous (see *Republic* chapter). He accommodates this multiplicity within each dialogue by telling causal stories about each of those parts. He can explain, for example, how one element came from Egypt and how another came from Sparta, and how they came to be together in this single place because Plato hears these various stories and records them — and haphazardly, or unthinkingly, endorses the one and denies the other. Here, Ryle offers us little reason to suppose that Plato is philosophically interesting.

Because of the way he approaches the dialogues, Ryle cannot avoid descending into ad hominem (see *Phaedo* chapter). His method is quite pregnant with that consequence. For, his reduction (that is to say, his reading of the meaning of the elements of the dialogue as given rather than gathered) essentially denies rather than discovers or recognizes value. Because his method effectively denies the unity of each dialogue, his method is nihilistic and it projects that very confusion onto Plato.

Pace Ryle, that single picture of science, which Ryle sees Socrates at one time denying and later asserting, is not a single picture at all. Here, Plato presents two competing methods, he has Socrates deny the one and endorse the other. Ryle's method brutalizes that clear distinction. Misreading this element of Plato is to misread Plato's direction to the reader on how his dialogue should be read. Socrates' supposed renunciation of natural science is really far more specific: he merely rejects the type of reductive or corpuscular explanation Anaxagorus will give for the nature of wholes. With such accounts, the parts are prior to the whole. With this assumption, Socrates cannot find what unifies him. Adding part to part to part to part to part, he can arrive at no genuine whole; only an aggregate. The problem with this type of explanation is not merely that Socrates ends up a mess of parts. Rather, the problem is that we cannot locate Socrates at all. Any supposed identification of Socrates will be arbitrary. Each of those apparently contingent parts has a story, but Socrates as a whole lacks a story. Here, we cannot locate agency or activity, but only movement or change.

The second type of explanation, which Ryle calls geophysical, is opposite in type to that earlier Anaxagorean reductive take on nature. That supposedly geophysical explanation, according to Socrates, concerns 'the nature of the earth as a whole' (*Phaedo* 111c). With this methodological contrast, Socrates directs his friends to an opposing form of enquiry (see *Phaedo* chapter). That is to say, he essentially directs them away from trying to make sense of him in the way Ryle proposes that we make sense of Plato.⁴

Because he is methodologically unreflective Ryle never recognizes a whole as anything other than the sum of its given parts. Under this perspective, geophysical explanation must collapse into the first (Anaxagorean account) with no explanatory loss. Thus, Ryle reads over Plato's attack on his own reductive method. In some sense Ryle is Meletus, he assumes Socrates as a direct communicator. Ryle along with Meletus condemns Socrates on this assumption.⁵

NOTES

- ¹ In his *Plato's Progress* Ryle suggests:

[i]n justice to Plato we should ask not 'Did Plato grow?' but rather 'What was the course of his philosophical growth?' (p. 10)

This search for, or preoccupation with, change is not incidental to his method; it is rather a determination of that method. Thus, Ryle's method can never recognise Plato as divine.

- ² Thus, according to Ryle's reading, we should place no significance on who in particular narrates each dialogue: it is incidental therefore that Socrates narrates the *Republic* and others figures narrate the *Symposium* and *Parmenides*, for example.

- ³ Broadly, Kraut agrees with Ryle's assumption regarding the purpose (if not the history) of Plato's form of communication. He states:

[t]he dialogue form provides a natural way to air challenges the reader might be expected to make to the theories under discussion; assigning an objection to a speaker is a vivid way of clarifying and defending the views being presented (*Companion* p. 27)

- ⁴ Ryle makes the same blunder in his reading of *Phaedrus*. He says of that dialogue that [t]he specimens of rhetoric introduced into the dialogue are indeed about Love, but they could have been about anything else without effecting the dialogue's argument. (*Progress* p. 36)

Here he refuses to take up Plato invitation to see a necessary connection between different types of love and different types of communication (see *Phaedrus* chapter). That is to say, Ryle refuses Plato's invitation to gather a new understanding of what it is genuinely to love and what it is genuinely to communicate. Ryle's conclusion (that there is something so fundamentally arbitrary about the dialogue) should be sufficient to warn him that he is heading down the wrong track. The fact that it does not, merely serves to exhibit the nihilism that that method imposes upon his understanding.

- ⁵ Unwittingly, Ryle falls under his own description of the slave boy of the *Meno*: '[t]o start with, the boy jumps to tempting but false answers' (*Encyclopedia* p. 325). Ryle, however, does not sufficiently explain the temptation he feels in the way that he reads Plato. He thus, unlike Plato, leaves his readers cold and bemused. The slave boy of the *Meno*, of course, ends up with the correct answer. However, the slave boy, unlike Ryle, recognises and is sensitive to the presence of Socrates.

Ryle does for Plato, what Zenophon did for Socrates. Kierkegaard suggests, if Zenophon's account of Socrates is correct

Athens people would rather have wanted Socrates done away with because he bored them than they feared him. (*The Concept of Irony* XIII 114)

In the same vain, if Ryle is right about Plato then Plato is hardly worth reading.

CHILDCARE ACTION PROJECT (NOTE)
SUPPOSING ART IS ANALYZABLE

3.1 METHODOLOGICAL FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE BRUTALITY OF PATERNALISM

A particularly crude but revealing example of a method that treats genuine (unified) wholes as aggregates is exhibited in the work of a group of self-styled film analysts at the ChildCare Action Project (CAP).

CAP investigations and analyses are conducted using the CAP Numeric Analysis Model, or the CAP Model. The CAP Model is applicable to any system or vehicle which imparts information to an observer which requires the observer to learn or to form an opinion, or which elicits emotion(s) or value judgment(s) in the observer. ...

An Investigator will observe relatively closed cultural or societal entities for occurrences [sic] of the Investigation Standards. Annotation of findings is performed using detailed recording instruments. The Investigator will then input his/her findings into a computer system. The computer system is designed to generate a numeric score in each of the six Investigation Areas plus a unique statistical average. The higher the CAP score the greater the moral acceptability of the cultural entity under investigation.¹

In other words, CAP catalogues instances of 'unacceptable' language, behaviour and attitudes that appear in each of its films of review. CAP categorize and sum the tally of such violations and, after applying a simple formula, score the film out of 100 — *Mary Poppins* scores a perfect 100. Other apparently uplifting films do not fare so well.

For example, consider CAP's analysis of Wes Anderson's *Rushmore* (1998).² As with all films falling within the coming-of-age genre *Rushmore*'s sensibilities lie in its focus on the struggles, frustrations, eventual resolutions and accompanying character development of young people in their first genuine forays into independence. Pursuing these themes, the very best of such films, come to settle upon the nature and creation of meaning.

What follows is a partial list, ready for an easy conversion into demerit points, of inappropriate behaviour cited in CAP's analysis of *Rushmore*:

insults by a teen to a stroke patient in his hospital bed ... a minor forcing himself into his female teacher's bed, a minor kissing his female teacher in her bed... guzzling booze and booze poured into a soda in the presence of a teen... 21 uses of the three/four letter word vocabulary ... arrogance against fair authority ... a dart shot into a younger boy's neck ... frequent lies to impress and to deflect accountability ... hatefulness and vengeance among and between minors and toward adults ... vulgar gesture to fair authority ... threat to kill ... starting a leaf fire on school property ... ignoring restrictions ... using bees to effect vengeance ... chucking rocks³

CAP's moral pedantry fails *Rushmore*: it scores the film at 39 out of 100. Their extended list of crimes and misdemeanours conveys neither context nor chronology. Thus, CAP's matter-of-fact, context-free, cataloguing gives us information without meaning.⁴ CAP strips the work of that form that makes it a whole and they pick over its remaining fragmentary content; thereby they misconceive the meaning of that content. For, those parts, which their analysis highlights, are not parts that we can recombine to form the object of their analysis — thus, those given elements, are not really genuine parts of the film at all.

CAP defends its techniques:

[t]he CAP Model relies on fact, not speculation — it is as objective as any human evaluation system can be. Either an example of unacceptable activity or behavior was present during the investigation or it was not.⁵

CAP takes facts as givens. Consequently, they assume that they can understand the elements of a film as it plays. That is to say, they suppose that they can appreciate the meaning of each scene of a film independently of a possible understanding of the whole of that film. For this reason, their analysis countenances no determination of the *facts* by the whole that is the film.

Only the very worst of films (i.e., those films that could never be mistaken for art), are not brutalised by CAP's methodological assumption. However, we make the whole mode of communication that is film look sad if we adopt that ad hominem method.

NOTES

¹ See www.capalert.com/method/method.htm

² *Rushmore* (1998). Directed by Wes Anderson. Written by Anderson and Owen Wilson. Touchstone Pictures.

³ www.capalert.com/capreports/rushmore98.htm

⁴ Ironically, if it is as CAP would have us believe — that meaning is given in the parts — then CAP unavoidably violates its own standards. For, if certain depictions, quite apart from the context of those depiction, violate their standards, then CAP violates those very standards in listing such violations — for the context of that listing is irrelevant.

⁵ *Ibid.*

4.1 REDUCTIONISM AND SELFISHNESS WITHOUT SELF

CAP's method brings a rule to its object; that rule determines the nature of that object. However, only in the very worst of cases does this determination bear any resemblance to the genuine nature of the work in question. However, in those very cases the work lacks genuine meaning. CAP needs to allow each film to deliver its own exegetical rule.

Richard Dawkins would not have much sympathy for what CAP does. For his attacks on religious fundamentalism are ferocious.¹ However, his dispute with them does not turn out to be very strong; for, he cannot take issue with their method. For after his own pejorative use of the term, there is something *religious* about Dawkins' own method. That is to say, his method confidently begs an important question about the nature of meaning. Dawkins' understanding of things is just as much hostage to his method as are the understandings of those whom he attacks.

In *The Blind Watchmaker*, Dawkins explicitly states the reductive rule of his method. He states:

[i]f there is a complex thing that we do not yet understand, we can come to understand it in terms of simpler parts that we do already understand. (*Blind* p. 11)

With this approach he essentially eliminates any possibility of a future negotiation between an understanding of a thing's parts and an understanding of that thing as a whole. For, he stipulatively defines the nature of the thing in terms of its 'simpler parts that we do already understand.' There is no problem with this strategy if the thing in question is merely an aggregate; but, if it is not, then Dawkins' method brutalises the nature of that unified whole. He thus illegitimately forecloses on the possible nature of the whole. Dawkins dismisses this kind of worry and dismisses his critic:

if he started boring on about the whole being greater than the sum of its parts, I will interrupt him: 'Never mind about that, tell me how it *works*.' (p. 11)

Dawkins assumes that his flavour of reductionism can get a handle on the complexity of wholes. He explains:

[t]he hierarchical reductionist explains a complex entity at any particular level in the hierarchy of organization in terms of entities only one level down in the hierarchy; entities which, themselves, are likely to be complex enough to need further reducing to their component parts; and so on. (p. 13)

However, Dawkins misunderstands his critic. His refinement of naïve reductionism does nothing to address the possible problem with the reductionist's method. For without a prior understanding of the whole, Dawkins has no warrant to assume that he has correctly identify those elements 'one level down in the hierarchy' from that whole. For if it is a genuine whole then our understanding of those elements one level down must be determined by our understanding of the whole. Dawkins here merely stipulates that the whole is nothing but a sum of those parts. He presents no case for this. If he is wrong (that is, if there exist genuine wholes) then he merely offers a recipe for misunderstanding them. In a sense, this reductive method arises from a doubting of the possibility of genuine wholes. However, the problem is that he cannot doubt himself free from that kind of doubt. Methodologically to doubt the possibility of a genuine (unified) whole is precisely to deny that possibility.

In contrast to the rule that determines Dawkins and CAP's every exegetical move, consider the artist's radically anti-paternalistic approach. An interviewer once asked Andrei Tarkovsky about the meaning of the symbolism in his films. This supposedly open question really forecloses on a more important issue; for, it unquestioningly presupposes a certain approach to understanding film. Tarkovsky replied that his films have no symbolism.² Thereby, Tarkovsky puts that reductive method in its place. In so doing, he frees his audience from the

constraint or the extrinsic determination of that rule. Here, Tarkovsky only directs his audience's understanding in a negative way. For, in as much as he disabuses them of those well-worn tools for interpretation — such as identifying and interpreting symbolism — he leaves them on our own before his works. In depriving his audience of that toolkit of concepts and rules, he reintroduces them to the autonomy and mystery of his works. That mystery should first humble his audience and then draw them up to discover in his work something new (creative) rather than something merely historically familiar and reworked.

Dawkins imposes a form upon the object of his inquiry rather than allowing that object to reveal its own form. After this manner, he forecloses on the appearance of mystery and thus he approaches everything already knowing. The apparent coming to know through his investigation is more properly an unfolding of something already contained in his method. Dawkins thus does for human nature what CAP does for films (or, what Lysias does for love (in his talk of love) – see *Phaedrus* chapter).

NOTES

- ¹ See e.g., Dawkins' 'Religion's misguided missiles: Promise a young man that death is not the end and he will willingly cause disaster' in *Guardian*, Saturday September 15, 2001: www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4257777,00.html. Also 'The God Shaped Hole' in *The Dubliner*, October, 2002: www.thedubliner.ie/cover_story_october_2002.php
- ² www.geocities.com/mishaca/interviews/tarkovsky.html. Elsewhere, Tarkovsky quotes extracts from various letters from viewers of his films; many of these viewers express their bemusement and they ask his help. He responds: '[u]nfortunately I have nothing to advise such correspondents' (*Sculpting in Time* p. 8).

DREYFUS (NOTE)

SUPPOSING PLATO TO HAVE HAD ANALYTIC AMBITIONS

5.1 INSIGHT AND INCONSISTENCY

Hubert Dreyfus is more attuned than most to the shortfalls of reductionism. However, he still unwittingly succumbs to that methodological temptation.

Dreyfus argues that our everyday understanding extends far beyond the reach of any possible analysis. Across several works, Dreyfus sustains a prolonged and persuasive attack against the proponents of Artificial Intelligence (AI). He essentially claims that the proponents of AI make the same erroneous assumption concerning human knowledge that CAP makes in relation to the meaning of cultural artefacts. Dreyfus takes his inspiration from the works of Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Kuhn (*Computers Still Can't* p. 56, 56-57, 277-278). Accordingly, he argues for the primacy and irreducibility of know-how knowledge over propositional or know-that knowledge. He thus emphasises the situatedness of knowledge and accuses those proponents of AI, who want to reduce all knowledge to a set of propositions, which can be loaded into a computer, of 'failing to ask what a world is' (p. 14).

Dreyfus's ferocious attack on the twentieth century's mechanical ambition of formalising all human knowledge has merit. However, his interpretations of some historical thinkers to whom he wishes to attribute the origin of that wrong-headed ambition seems to result from him engaging in those practices he counts as so illicit. Dreyfus argues that 'the heart of the problem', which intoxicates those analytic ambitions of proponents of AI, is the 'information-processing model of the mind' (p. 10). The proponents of AI, according to Dreyfus, seek to realise '[a]n old rationalist dream' (pp. x-xi). The founding premiss of that dream, according to Dreyfus, is, 'the rationalist assumption that understanding equals analysis' (p. xxx).

The irony of Dreyfus's attack enters with him identifying Plato as the founding father of that analytic view. Dreyfus asserts:

Plato leaves no doubt about his view: any action which is in fact sensible, i.e., nonarbitrary, has a rational structure which can be expressed in terms of some theory and any person taking such action will be following, at least implicitly, this very theory taken as a set of rules. (pp. 176-177)

The story of artificial intelligence might well begin around 450 B.C. when (according to Plato) Socrates demands of Euthyphro, a fellow Athenian who, in the name of piety, is about to turn his own father in for murder: "I want to know what is characteristic of piety which makes all actions pious ... that I may have it to, and to use as a standard whereby to judge your actions and those of other men." Socrates is asking Euthyphro for what modern computer theorists would call an "effective procedure," "a set of rules which tell us, from moment to moment, precisely how to behave." (p. 67)

And, finally:

[a] digital computer is a machine which operates according to the sort of criteria Plato once assumed could be used to understand any orderly behaviour. (p. 192)

Dreyfus's understanding of Plato could only have resulted from him reading Plato's dialogues in the way in which he accuses proponents of AI reading human knowledge. That is, Dreyfus refuses to recognise that the situatedness of Plato's utterances determine their meaning. Not for a moment does Dreyfus entertain the possibility that Plato (and Plato's Socrates) is trying to show us something rather than directly tell us something (or elicit a direct telling from us). For, if Dreyfus had considered the possibility that the meaning of Plato's dialogues escape a reductive analysis of their content, he would see that his accusations fall flat. Dreyfus essentially conflates the same two questions Kraut conflates: namely, the question concerning the possible influence of Plato's dialogues on the history of western philosophy and the question concerning the meaning of Plato's works.

With his appeal to *Euthyphro*, Dreyfus assumes that in that dialogue and elsewhere Plato seeks a discursive rule. Given his own understanding of what it is to understand, it would be more consistent and plausible for him to assume that Plato confronts Euthyphro (and in turn us, the readers of the dialogue) with the characteristic of piety as exemplified in the person Socrates. Socrates shows rather than tells Euthyphro something about piety. The more context we offer to Socrates' inquisition of Euthyphro the more plausible this conclusion becomes (see *Euthyphro* chapter). That is, the more we are drawn to conceiving the meaning of Socrates' enquiry as determined by the context of that enquiry the more we are drawn away from Dreyfus's reading of Plato and toward Dreyfus's attack on the sins of analysis.

In another context, Dreyfus makes a more interestingly inconsistent claim. The following inconsistency is more interesting for its reflexiveness. Dreyfus suggests: '[o]ne paradigm, it seems, is worth a thousand rules' (p. 24). In this claim, Dreyfus again falls into the very habit of analysis that he seeks to have that very claim attack. If a paradigm is literally worth a thousand rules then it would seem that know-how knowledge, which is manifested in a paradigm, can after all be reduced to propositional knowledge.

However, Dreyfus's slips are inconsistencies with his method rather than outcomes from his method. And thus such examples perhaps only serve to show the pervasiveness of that tradition that he fights against. Dreyfus is also fighting to free himself from its grip. Thus, Dreyfus shows us something; and in that showing he has us warn ourselves.

KUHN

SUPPOSING SCIENCE INVESTIGATES A WORLD

6.1 EXEMPLARS AND THE FORM OF AN UNDERSTANDING.....	80
6.2 DOUBT AND REVOLUTION.....	81
6.3 TRUTH AND UNITY.....	82
6.4 BEAUTY AND REASON.....	82
6.5 THE CRITICAL ATTITUDE AND CREATION.....	83
6.6 ANALYSIS AND NIHILISM.....	84
NOTES.....	86

6.1 EXEMPLARS AND THE FORM OF AN UNDERSTANDING

The essence of Kuhn's conception of paradigms or exemplars is surely the one that Dreyfus's position demands. According to Kuhn, a single exemplary problem-solution can inspire, and so determine, a whole tradition of scientific research. The extension of an exemplar thus accommodates the diversity of the world, or more correctly accommodates diversity as a *world*. However, if we attempt to tie down an exemplar's expression to a set of rules, we cognitively and practically distance ourselves from that form which immediately unites that diversity. In other words, we distance ourselves from the essential expression of that exemplar.

According to Kuhn, the vast majority of scientific practice falls within periods of normal science (*Structure* cf. p. 5). During such times, scientists are inspired, and their activity is determined, by 'examples of actual scientific practice' (p. 10; also see pp. 42, 46), i.e., 'universally recognised scientific achievements' or exemplary problem-solutions (p. x). According to this picture, 'concrete scientific achievement[s], [are] ... a locus of professional commitment, prior to various concepts, laws, theories, and points of view that maybe abstracted from [them]' (p. 11). Kuhn suggests:

[s]cientists ... never learn concepts, laws, and theories in the abstract and by themselves. Instead, these intellectual tools are from the start encountered in a historical and pedagogically prior unit that displays them with and through their applications. (p. 46)

Thus, according to Kuhn, students learn to be scientists in much the same way apprentices learn to be trades people (see p. 43): just as someone who by boxing foundations, framing walls, pitching roofs and hanging doors etc. learns to be a carpenter, so it is for scientists; for them, 'doing problems is learning the language of a theory' (*Reflections* p 264; also cf. p. 272).¹ Education under a paradigm, at least during the reign of normal science, is thus heavily practical and importantly involves rehearsing exemplary problem-solutions.

Central to Kuhn's conception of exemplars is his claim that '[s]cientific fact and theory are not categorically separable' (*Structure* p. 7). In other words, according to Kuhn, exemplars not only determine a way of inquiring into nature but they also direct us to a way of describing nature (p. 109). Exemplars are thus, according to Kuhn, world defining. For this reason — because of the express showing and implicit telling of the 'universally recognised scientific achievements' (p. x) — the practice of normal science 'is predicated on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like' (p. 5).

A practitioner working under a paradigm implicitly assumes that she knows what nature is like. Because of this confidence, she 'is a solver of puzzles, not a tester of paradigms' (p. 143). During such calm periods of science-as-cumulation (p. 96), practitioners seek to extend the scope and precision of the dominant exemplar (pp. 52, 53). By solving the anomalies thrown up by that exemplar, practitioners achieve this extension. Normal science, thus involves practitioners actualising the promises of the exemplar (pp. 23-24). Because normal science is characterised by the extension of the dominant paradigm the activity of normal science essentially involves the scientist showing something or at least attempting to show something.

Even though, at times anomalies will frustrate every practitioner, such frustrations will not cause good practitioners to doubt the promise of the ruling paradigm. Because exemplary

problem-solutions, which drive the research programs of normal science, bespeak success, scientists will blame themselves rather than their exemplars for any relative lack of success. They see themselves failing the exemplar rather than the exemplar failing them. Because exemplars offer an overflowing promise for an understanding, or because they exhibit fecundity of expression, practitioners conceive anomalies as puzzles rather than causes for questioning the worthiness of the ruling exemplar (p. 79).

Those problems, which practitioners conceive of as holding a solution under their exemplar's determination, fuel research programs. Under the influence of a paradigm, particular kinds of problems for consideration are self-selected. Because of this, there is a genuine paradigm-induced expectation of success. Such problems, according to Kuhn, are thus more rightly termed 'puzzles'. For in contrast with some problems, puzzles properly so-called are invariably soluble (p. 37). Thus, those puzzles, which are thrown up for research during the reign of normal science, 'serve to test [scientists'] ingenuity or skill' (p. 36). Scientists are aware that they can fail such tests of their mettle.

During the run of normal science, meaning transcends frustrated scientists to the extent that they can secure no locus of authority from which to question the ruling paradigm. Only success provides such a locus. There is thus no sense in which a frustrated practitioner can forcefully claim: *because I have not solved this problem the exemplar has failed me*. Frustrated practitioners must therefore creatively reassess their own approach and thinking as genuine emulations of what is manifest in the exemplar. When expectations are not met, good practitioners, like good carpenters, blame themselves rather than their tools (p. 79).²

This is not to say that the exemplar will never be found wanting. However, because of the connection of meaning to the expression of exemplars, any levelling of blame or unworthiness (by a worthy practitioner) must also involve a paradigm shift. If practitioners are to sacrifice the meaning, promise and understanding of one exemplar, they must only do it at the feet of another (more promising) exemplar. Else, they give up on meaning, or, they 'reject science itself' (p. 79). Thus, throughout both normal and revolutionary science the practitioner implicitly holds firmly to the belief in unity of nature (or the unity of meaning). If an exemplar shows itself unable to secure this end, it is abandoned to something else that looks more promising.

6.2 DOUBT AND REVOLUTION

If a paradigm's best practitioners show that its central anomalies are recalcitrant to their greatest efforts, the reign of normal science grinds to a halt and scientists embark on the extraordinary investigations of revolutionary science. For, when the extended and concerted effort of a paradigm's best practitioners ends in collective failure then suspicion rightly arises concerning the promise of that governing exemplar; for, the exemplar shows itself unable to explain the facts that it describes (p. 11).³ Under such circumstances, practitioners realise that 'nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science' (pp. 53-54). Whereupon, scientists begin to change their focus; for, their repeated failures bring insecurity (pp. 67-68, 82), introspection, crisis and ultimately failure for the ruling paradigm.

In the accompanying period of extraordinary investigation, scientists stop doing what they previously practised as science and start doing philosophy (in the form of analysis) (p. 88). That is to say, their activity ceases to show something — rather than continuing to extend the paradigm, they start analysing it (pp. 47-48). Thus, practitioners change their investigative motion from a centrifugally sweeping extension of their perspective to a centripetally inwardly focusing analysis of the foundations and the rules that governed their previous research. Such scrutiny not only marks the demise of the exemplar (for they can never doubt themselves free from doubt), but, in doing so, it prepares the ground for a scientific revolution — 'the tradition-shattering [complement] to the tradition-bound activity of normal science' (p. 6).

Before a scientific revolution can occur, (the more able) practitioners must invent other exemplars. These initial and sketchy conceptions of alternative views and approaches to nature compete for the allegiance of practitioners. Slowly a new way of conceiving nature wins practitioners over from the faltering paradigm. Practitioners change their allegiance upon the

expectation that an alternative exemplar offers more promise (cf. pp. 17-18, 23). Once that new paradigm has won the force of numbers, a new period of normal science arises.

6.3 TRUTH AND UNITY

In the *Structure*, Kuhn shows us something; for, he not so much analyzes the history of science, he constructs it, or puts it together, according to what his conception of paradigms prescribes. In this respect, we can see how Kuhn's thinking on exemplars is itself exemplary.

Significantly, however, when Kuhn pauses, from that creative and prescribed enterprise, to reflect in an analytical way upon his own construction, he almost invariably falters. Even though he does not in those faltering sections expressly doubt his own theory, he nevertheless unwittingly adopts a method of doubt. With those moments of analysis, he introduces incoherencies into his own work; and, in doing so, he again reflexively shows us something. This time he shows us something of which he warns us: namely the destructive progress of analysis. Ironically and fittingly, his acts of analysis do not merely threaten a particular exemplar but they threaten his very conception of exemplars.

His analysis does most damage in the last few pages of the *Structure*. If someone with an eye for what is complete had stood over him while he wrote that work, she should have pulled the work from under his pen before he reached that final and fateful thirteenth chapter: 'Progress through Revolutions'. In those pages, Kuhn denies that science aims at truth. With that denial, he abruptly and forcefully distances meaning from truth. According to that purpose, Kuhn compares the "progress" of science with that of Darwinian evolution. In doing so, Kuhn essentially denies that science genuinely progresses.

Kuhn explains that Darwin introduced a paradigm shift into biology; that shift entailed the elimination of teleology from evolutionary thinking (p. 172). Thus, according to Darwin, evolution does not aim at anything; for this reason, evolutionary design does not need a designer. Darwin thus argues that we can understand the "progress" of nature without positing a goal for that "progress." Just as evolution creates a fittedness between organisms and their environments, so too do researchers fit science to nature. Thus, Kuhn suggests, we can understand the "progress" of science without supposing that it aims at truth (pp. 171-173). Here Kuhn essentially denies any possible realist epistemological understanding of science's *progress through revolutions*.

However, Kuhn fails to explain the conception of truth involved in his denial that science makes progress towards it. Moreover, he surely misconstrues the analogy with biological evolution. Kuhn is doubtless correct in claiming that there is nothing forward looking about Darwinian evolution. Further, even if we accept that there is nothing forward looking about those practices determined by an exemplar (which seems a stretch), there is still something essentially forward looking about the practitioner. For, if those practices sufficiently frustrate practitioners, they will look for something else offering more promise. If we cannot connect this directedness of the practitioner to her aim at truth then it is unclear whatever we could mean when we refer to the pursuit of truth. Kuhn's problem here is that he lets his concept of truth slip out from under the determining influence of his paradigm. Consequently, he cannot say what truth is.

Kuhn's comparison of the history of science with evolution draws our attention to those crucial junctures in that history that are scientific revolutions. Kuhn compares the creation of new paradigms with that mechanism that introduces variation into a species' gene pool. That latter mechanism according to Darwinian evolution is completely random. Thus, with this comparison Kuhn has us identify what is creative with that what is random. He thereby, implicitly eliminates any rational elements from what is essentially creative. With this move, Kuhn distances science from truth.

6.4 BEAUTY AND REASON

Kuhn analyses the possible reasons for why practitioners, during extraordinary or revolutionary periods of science, adopt particular exemplars over competing exemplars. In his search for the grounds for such choices, he appears to undermine the possible influence of reason. At one low point Kuhn suggests:

[a]s in political revolutions, so in paradigm choice—there is no standard higher than the consent of the relevant community. (p. 93)

A few chapters on, Kuhn re-emphasizes the apparently non-rational ground for paradigm choice:

[s]omething must make at least a few scientists feel that the new proposal is on the right track, and sometimes it is only personal and inarticulate aesthetic considerations that can do that. (p. 158)

Elsewhere in that work, Kuhn suggests that no logical or probabilistic appeal can be made in support of a new paradigm. Consequently, the only arguments that proponents of an exemplar can proffer are circular (p. 93).

Of all the many factors Kuhn lists as possibly entering into grounds for paradigm choice, he emphasizes above all others the influence of aesthetic appeal (pp. 72, 158, esp. 155-156). However, without explicitly tying down his understanding of the grounds for aesthetic appeal he leaves us all at sea. If, for example, he had tied his understanding of aesthetic appeal to Kant's worked up understanding of that affect then the worries about Kuhn's relativism would thereby be allayed. However, as Kuhn leaves it in the *Structure*, he collapses our judgement of facts onto our value judgements and leaves us to conjecture: *since he is a relativist about fact, he must surely also be a relativist concerning value.*

That latter move, which secures Kuhn as a relativist, is invited but is not strictly speaking warranted. For, with a little work, we can make out as rationally grounded all those stated grounds for choice, which seem to be at first glance without much rational foundation. For example, that unassailable standard of choice — namely, the consent of a community — need not imply relativism; especially when the relevant community, values highly rationality. Consider also the possible sin of circular arguments: circular arguments only appear irrational if one emphasises the analytic rather than the synthetic operation of reason. Moreover, with such an emphasis on merely the analytic operation of reason, we essentially deny the conception of knowledge pointed to in the *Structure*.

Even so, given what Kuhn does say, compared to what he could have said but significantly did not say, he makes the reading of him as a relativist at least tenable. In leaving the door wide-open to relativism, he significantly undermines the rational *structure* of scientific revolutions and in doing so distances us from conceiving genuine progress at work in the history of scientific endeavour.

6.5 THE CRITICAL ATTITUDE AND CREATION

All the above slips by Kuhn are akin to Dreyfus's slips: they are gratuitous and so distracting to the essential meaning of his work. With a misplaced modesty, Kuhn caps the influence of the exemplary or creative nature of his work. His analysis therefore removes something from his work. For, it expressly eliminates an aspect, which would otherwise lie pregnant as a possibility. However, insofar as those pieces of analysis seek to limit the scope of his work, they also cease to be a part of the exemplary nature of that work.

Perhaps Kuhn's problem in the *Structure* is that he is too caught up in the very tradition that he seeks to attack.⁴ The young Popper, in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* defines that opposing tradition. There, Popper 'distinguish[es] sharply between the process of conceiving a new idea, and the methods and results of examining it logically' (*Logic* p. 31). In so doing, he champions the analytic operation of reason and finds no definite place for reason's synthetic application. To be sure, Popper could have emphasised the synthetic role of reason in the invention of new ideas or new understandings of nature. However, in his effort to distance himself — in an analytically respectable way — from Hume's analytic problem of induction, he did not want to connect the invention of new construals of nature with reason. Consequently he asserts that there is an 'irrational element' in every discovery (p. 32). Concerning rationality Popper states:

I equate the rational attitude with the critical attitude. The point is that whenever we try to propose a solution to a problem, we ought to try as hard as we can to overthrow the solution, rather than defend it (p. 16).

Kuhn explicitly rejects Popper's latter prescriptive point. According to Kuhn, scientists are unreservedly committed to their exemplar inspired understanding of the world; during the reign of normal science, practitioners seek to extend rather than question their understanding. Scientists implicitly premise their endeavour on the assumption that their approach to understanding nature is correct.

In addition to distancing himself from Popper in regard to method, Kuhn should have also expressly rejected Popper's former stipulation: i.e., his exclusive identification of 'the rational attitude with the critical attitude.' However, if anything, Kuhn's express remarks about reason in the *Structure* appear to support Popper's analytic conception of that faculty. And it is precisely through his apparent support for Popper's characterisation of reason that Kuhn distances reason from much that he conceives as central to the work of scientists. Consequently, insofar as Kuhn follows Popper in this respect he fails to offer a genuine alternative to Popper's overall perspective on scientific method.

Kuhn's analytic reading of reason in *The Structure* allowed his proponents (from the humanities) and his opponents (from philosophy and the sciences) collectively to tar him as an irrationalist and relativist. However, Kuhn subsequently adds a corrective. In his essay 'Reflections On My Critics', he argues that such epithets misconstrue his work and, in turn, the nature of rationality. He explains:

to describe [my] argument as a defense of irrationality in science seems to me not only absurd but vaguely obscene. I would describe it, together with my own, as an attempt to show that existing theories of rationality are not quite right and that we must readjust or change them to explain why science works as it does. To suppose, instead, that we possess criteria of rationality which are independent of our understanding of the essentials of the scientific process is to open the door to cloud-cuckoo land (*Reflections* p. 264).⁵

Here, we can see Kuhn putting something together, which he failed to do in the *Structure*. Instead of meeting his previous analysis with further analysis, Kuhn, in his *Reflections*, essentially denies that former slip and thereby frees and actualises some of the promise of the exemplary aspect of his work. With this synthetic act, he essentially establishes the synthetic operation of reason as central to his account of scientific practice. He thus extends the exemplary perspective of the *Structure* to finally cover the nature of rationality. In turn, in reassessing his view of rationality, Kuhn also invites us to reassess his concept of truth and so too his denial that his work says anything about human nature (see *Structure* p. 173).

Kuhn thus comes to emphasise the synthetic role of reason in our aesthetic appreciation of exemplars. Similarly, he implicitly emphasises reason's essential role in our acts of creation and understanding. Consequently, even though Kuhn makes facts dependent on the way practitioners value, (in his final synthesis) he does not thereby become a relativist. For even though Kuhn's final account of exemplar dominance comes to rest on practitioners' aesthetic judgements (cf. p. 77), these judgements are inseparable from what it is to be rational. Kuhn thus essentially invites us to conceive of that aesthetic form as essentially constitutive of meaning and truth. Thus, those value judgements, which decide so much during revolutionary periods in science and which thus tie the different periods in the history of science together, essentially involve the form of reason.

On this perspective of Kuhn's story, we can tie those alternating periods in the history of science together into a single endeavour (instead of multiple and incommensurable endeavours). This single story details the aesthetic progress of science. This perspective on Kuhn's contribution to a possible understanding of science, has much in sympathy with the possible story that combines the first half (concerning the form of aesthetic judgements) and second half (concerning the application of aesthetic judgements to our understanding of nature) of Kant's *Critique of Judgement*.

6.6 ANALYSIS AND NIHILISM

Recall how Dreyfus uncharacteristically suggests a possible reduction of exemplars to rules (*Computers Still Can't* p. 24); importantly, Kuhn explicitly denies this possibility. He asserts

that an exemplar is 'a fundamental unit ... a unit that cannot be reduced to logically atomic components which might function in its stead' (*Structure* p. 11; also cf. p. 46). In addition, Kuhn goes one daring and significant step further: He suggests that once we make a concerted effort to locate such rules then the positive work of an exemplar is at its end (*Structure* cf. p. 44).

According to Kuhn, a search for the foundations of an exemplar cannot succeed. For, in the sciences, such a search results from frustration and suspicion — the results of such a search cannot embarrass the doubt that initiates it. For, such a search misconceives the logical form of an exemplar. Analysis thus seeks something it ought not find. For an exemplar does not have foundations, it has unity or at least the promise of unity. An exemplar is an aesthetic (or indirect) argument of which analysis can offer no substitute.

Under Kuhn's conception of science, a search for foundations already betrays the exemplar's lack of sufficient unity (or the poverty of its promise to offer a complete understanding). Thus, in such cases the exemplar does not die because practitioners cannot find its foundations but rather it dies because practitioners are driven to look for its foundations. In that moment of suspicion (even though their projected grounds for suspicion are in a sense misconceived), they stop treating the exemplar as exemplary (*Structure* p. 48, 87-88). No progress of analysis can restore that lost status. For, analysis is quite an opposite endeavour to that invited by the form of an exemplar. There is nothing exemplary about the action of analysis.

Analysing and exemplifying oppose each other as direct opposes indirect communication. Even though an exemplar embodies or points towards a worldview, nothing of value is directly given in the expression of an exemplar. Exemplars communicate indirectly insofar as they show and implicitly invite us to participate with the form of their action. Accepting the direction manifest in an exemplar requires a moral or aesthetic judgement; that judgement is caught up in our very recognition of an exemplar as an exemplar. For, since there is no direct telling or directing with an exemplar, our judgement, whether it is approving or disapproving, requires our understanding to first participate with that form. Else, there is nothing of which to approve or disapprove, accept or reject. Therefore, under the influence of an exemplar we essentially judge only what we work together ourselves. Upon that positive (moral or aesthetic) judgement, we embrace something concrete as the mark of meaning — or, we embrace something concrete as an analogue of a form of reason, which marks meaning. For, upon our reason completing a form, our reason recognises meaning. Thus, only with our activity, do exemplars offer us a form to extend in our understanding of the world. Our ability to recognise an exemplar as an exemplar thus reveals an activity of the understanding, which both connects to our ability to gather meaning and our ability to find, recognise and create value. Since the activity that is necessary for us to recognise an exemplar as an exemplar is creative, we do not and cannot consistently treat exemplars questioningly; exemplars cease to be exemplars insofar as we question the direction they express.

In contrast to the showing of exemplars, analysis engages in a telling (or direct communication). Analysis explicitly decides something or it delivers a judgement rather than invites a judgement. When this operation of reason is turned on an exemplar it demands a decisive but defensive and so a less confident voice: a voice to shore up what is already present, rather than a voice we can extend far beyond what is immediately present. The analytic scrutiny of an exemplar thus threatens to convert an exemplar's fecundate expression into something more insular and staid. In a sense, when we attempt to analyze an exemplar we, with one application of reason, attempt to make sense of the opposite application of reason. We attempt to analyze a synthetic activity. We can only embark on such a venture by denying the autonomy of the synthetic operation of reason. With our analysis of exemplars we implicitly assume that synthesis is just analysis operating in the opposite direction. That is to say, we assume our synthesising involves our reason aggregating rather than creating. With this denial of a genuinely synthetic operation of reason, we essentially deny value and we thereby (through our analysis) eliminate value from exemplars.

Analysis converts indirect into direct communication. And in so doing it annihilates the value that is expressed in an exemplar. For, an exemplar's value is not directly given to us, but arises within us with our act of gathering its form. Thus, analysis, in seeking to externalise (or make direct) that which is internal (or indirect) to the exemplar, cannot succeed. The types of rules that analysis seeks only promise to explain the particularity rather than the universality of the exemplar. Because analysis converts showing into telling, the discursive rules that it delivers particularise and so kill exemplification. Analysing an exemplar threatens to tie its communication down *as expressing precisely this rather than that*. In this way, analysis freezes, and so debilitates, the dynamism that is the life of an exemplar's expression. In those cases where analysis delivers rules, it discovers what has already exhausted itself. For those rules will explain the particularity rather than the universality of the exemplar. Thus, the rules delivered by analysis are closer to pure description than prescription. Our discursive acquaintance with such rules does not help us to extend the sweep of the exemplar and so does not help to extend our understanding. Consequently, there is nothing exemplary about analysis. Because analysis can exhibit neither value nor a way of valuing, its form is (unintentionally) nihilistic. That is to say, its form can never be completed.

Methodologically, from Kuhn's perspective, science gets it right. For, scientists only employ analysis once an exemplar ceases to communicate, that is to say, once the exemplar ceases to be exemplary. Scientists thus search for meaning only when meaning is already frustrated. Consequently, with their analysis they sacrifice nothing and with an enquiry, which would be under any other circumstances debilitating, they psychologically free themselves to recognise or create a more promising perspective. By doing otherwise — by engaging in such a search for foundations when the meaning of an exemplar is still alive — they threaten prematurely to exhaust that exemplary expression. For, such analysis essentially begs the question against the possible future communication of the exemplar and effectively frees the practitioner from the influence of that possible expression. For if our analysis is able to find rules, it thereby artificially caps the possible expression of the exemplar. For, under those rules the expression of the exemplar is determined. That determinate horizon we create with the mechanical application of those rules. In contrast, without such discursive rules, an exemplar's expression is far more indeterminate. Or, more correctly, *we* determine the expressiveness of an exemplar. This purchase we achieve through our creative and analogical reapplication of what we conceive as manifest in the exemplar. Thus, if, after the expectation of Dreyfus, we are able to successfully replace an exemplar with rules then by doing so we essentially uncover the poverty of that exemplar. We reveal just how un-exemplary and mechanical that exemplar is.

In those cases in which our analysis fails to uncover consistent rules governing the expression of an exemplar, we more immediately cap the expression of the exemplar. Once again, that end may be premature. For such inconsistencies through our creative extension of the exemplar might naturally resolve. For, an exemplar promises an understanding of the world. Its concrete expression does not comprise such an understanding; that concrete expression merely points towards a more general way of understanding. Thus, if we cannot formalise the concrete expression of an exemplar that failure we cannot transitively impose upon that possible way of understanding pointed to by the exemplar. For that understanding, we do not create from that concrete expression mechanically but creatively.⁶

NOTES

¹ There is perhaps something importantly disanalogous in this comparison of the carpenter with the scientist. For, there is something essentially aggregative about the nature of what the carpenter builds. This may well not be the case for the object of the scientist's endeavour.

² Also cf. *Structure* p. 80: '[i]t is a poor carpenter who blames his tools.'

³ Also cf. *Structure* p. 97:

[p]aradigms provide all phenomena except anomalies with a theory determined place in the scientist's vision.

⁴ See *Structure* p. 77:

[n]o process yet disclosed by the historical study of scientific development at all resembles the methodological stereotype of falsification by direct comparison with nature.

⁵ Also cf. *Reflections* p. 262:

[w]hat I am denying then is neither the existence of good reasons nor that these reasons are of the sort usually described. I am, however, insisting that such reasons constitute values to be used in making choices rather than rules of choice.

⁶ Concerning analytically inscrutable exemplars, consider for example the case of Nietzsche: Nietzsche's express communication defies an analysis that preserves his activity as exemplary. In the precocious contradictoriness of his expression, he implicitly demands that we understand him in a way antithetical to the way of understanding offered by analysis. And for the most part we quite naturally fall in with Nietzsche's implicit demand; his contradictions do not tempt us to fault him. We enjoy rather than question his play. Indeed, we should feel ourselves caught out or embarrassed in calling him up on those contradictions. For in doing so we expressly impose a standard — of direct communication — which he so obviously calls into question. Thus, if we find fault with Nietzsche on this score, we more obviously expose a fault with our own way of understanding.

Worse than taking issue with Nietzsche's contradictions, we could defuse them through that first movement of analysis. We take that first movement when we assume that we reach our understanding of the whole through first understanding its parts. (In other words, that first move involves our denying the autonomy of the whole.) Consequently, according to that move, we split up Nietzsche's influx of tradition-shattering perspectives and hold them apart. With a direct reading, when we find that those parts do not easily recombine, we deny that there is a single Nietzsche and in turn we postulate that there are many Nietzsches. However, in so doing, in claiming that each Nietzsche we can appreciate in isolation from the others, we deflate that force with which Nietzsche confronts our understanding. That force, which we have removed, is contained in those contradictions and tensions, which arise when those fiery perspectives sit (or hit) one against the others. Immediately we carve Nietzsche up, we dissipate that force. We make benign to our understanding that violence Nietzsche means to wreak. Thus, that first move of analysis extinguishes much of the life or dynamism of Nietzsche.

KANT

SUPPOSING ALL EDUCATION IS IMITATIVE

7.1 THE SUBLIME AND THE BEAUTIFUL UNDERSTANDINGS.....	88
7.2 INCOMMENSURABLE VALUES AND METHODOLOGY	89
7.3 FIRST CRITIQUE AND SUBLIME SYNTHESIS.....	89
7.4 THIRD CRITIQUE AND BEAUTIFUL JUSTIFICATION FOR A SUBLIME SYNTHESIS	90
7.5 ART AND SCIENCE.....	91
NOTES.....	94

7.1 THE SUBLIME AND THE BEAUTIFUL UNDERSTANDINGS

In his pre-critical work, *Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and Sublime*, Kant details the differences between the two possible types of moral or aesthetic understandings. Broadly speaking, this distinction is one between on the one hand a tendency towards, and a valuing of, reason, and, on the other hand, a tendency towards, and a valuing of, sense (*Observations* p. 79)

Kant characterizes the sublime as always great (p. 38). Thus, the feeling of the sublime is one of esteem (p. 51) and it essentially connects to the virtues of duty and justice. There is something universal (p. 65) and deep (p. 78) about the sublime understanding.

In contrast, according to Kant, beautiful objects are able to be small and ornamented (p. 38). Such stimulate *love* rather than esteem (p. 51) and they evoke feelings of sympathy and charity rather than duty (pp. 58, 63). Thus, the beautiful understanding is concerned with the particular or what is multiple and concrete rather than with what is universal. This type of temperament is thus concerned with what is given to the senses rather than to reason.

Kant's distinction here is the same one Isaiah Berlin makes while appealing to a fragment from the ancient Greek Poet Archilochus, which reads: '[t]he fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing' (*Thinkers* p. 22). Berlin goes on to divide all thinkers between these species.

Kant carries this distinction between the beautiful and sublime understandings into all of his three critiques; with it, he diagnoses the maladies of past philosophical extravagancies and modesties; in turn, he also seeks to use it to mediate a solution to those past aberrations. Historically, rationalist (or sublime) philosophers, in their metaphysical understandings of the world, used reason's idea of an unconditioned unity, or the demand of reason for comprehension in one intuition (CJ 254), in a thoroughly constructive or determining way. During this extended era in the history of western philosophy, reason was allowed to construct unity outside the bounds of possible intuition. Reason, in playing this determining role, dragged the understanding (the faculty that, according to Kant, plays the role of constructing concepts) beyond a place where it could have empirical employment (cf. CPR A 642/B 670, A 643/B 671).

Spinoza, in his *Ethics*, for example, confidently follows this sublime principle of reason to an unconditioned unity and unhesitatingly posits that unity as 'God or nature.' Spinoza's sublime understanding finds no place for beauty; he denigrates the senses to the role of delivering only mutilated and confused ideas. Thus, for Spinoza, only reason can arrive at adequate ideas. Reason provides a stern corrective to the muddle of the passions. Because Spinoza's world is through and through sublime, he can find no philosophically respectable role for the beautiful understanding.

Hume, in contrast, asserts that we can appeal to what is unconditioned, only if we can ground it in experience. Observing that his experience only receives what is merely contingent, Hume concludes that we cannot legitimately arrive at anything universal from a consideration of particulars. According to the bent of his beautiful understanding, he dismisses Spinoza's determination of reason as an activity without warrant. Reason of itself, according to Hume, cannot inform us regarding matters of fact. The only legitimate role that Hume's understanding can find for reason is an instrumental rather than an originating one. His beautiful understanding thus leads him to settle on the received manifold of nature.

Cartwright, in her work *How the Laws of Physics Lie*, continues a Humean attack on the sublime role of reason in science. She subscribes to the 'metaphysical ... belief in the richness and variety of the concrete particular' (*Laws of Physics*, p 19). This belief, alone, is not sufficient to make her a combatant of those of a more rationalistic temperament for such a variety amongst concrete particulars is perfectly consistent with the existence of a thoroughgoing unity exhibited in theoretical covering laws. Leibniz, with his Principle of Perfection, for example, argues for this very coupling of maximal variety of phenomena with simplicity of covering laws.

Cartwright is however an anti-realist concerning theoretical laws, but not in regard to theoretical entities. Thus, she overtly sides with the particular rather than the universal. Stating her anti-realist metaphysical commitment Cartwright, thus, asserts that there is something brute about concrete variety. The richness and variety of nature, according to Cartwright, does not explanatorily give itself up to anything more general. Nature is thus 'a jumble' (p 19), where '[w]hat happens on most occasions is dictated by no law at all.' (p 49).¹

To lay bare the tautology manifest by the coupling of the rationalists' method with its consequent metaphysical conclusions Cartwright facetiously mimics that philosophical malady with her beautiful understanding: 'God', she suggests, 'may have written just a few laws and grown tired' (p. 49). Elsewhere, she conjectures: 'I think that God has the untidy mind of the English' (p. 19). Without the originating role of reason the manifold of experience remains something quite brute.

7.2 INCOMMENSURABLE VALUES AND METHODOLOGY

The dispute here between empiricists and rationalists is at base moral or aesthetic. For, each receives or conceives of nature in accordance with her or his conception of value. It just so happens that each has a different conception of what is good. Cartwright's talk of untidiness and tiredness clouds the issue. With this language, she seems to suggest that God's nature, falls short of an ideal. However, this is not the case; for, using this language, she merely goes out of her way to offend the sublime understanding by using that understanding's projections as the vehicle for her quite opposite ideals: she hijacks their form with her content. In so doing, she implicitly displays her own distaste for the sublime ideals; they are ideals that deny, or seek to annihilate, her conception of value.

From her own perspective, Cartwright does not think that there is anything tired about nature; rather, she is jealous of preserving that supposed jumble. For, if nature exhibited less brute variety and multiplicity, that is to say, if something quite simple accounted for that apparently quite diverse phenomena, it would be from her perspective less good. Thereby, nature, from her perspective, would manifest less value. For her, more orderliness does not increase meaning; it reduces it.

If we, along with Cartwright, emphasize the possible aesthetical rather than the theoretical difference between scientists, it is evident that there is nothing that one group of scientists can discover that will be sufficient to convert someone who holds to the opposing aesthetic conception of value. Hence, nothing that sublime scientists could discover could divest Cartwright of her own beautiful conception of nature. For, even if those scientists discovered or invented quite simple theoretical laws that explain the complexity of nature, she need only deny the reality of those laws to preserve her value-laden conception of nature. Cartwright is aware of this, and concedes that '[w]e do not know if we are in a tidy universe or an untidy one' (p 49) — in a sense, we morally or aesthetically decide.

7.3 FIRST CRITIQUE AND SUBLIME SYNTHESIS

When the sublime understanding and the beautiful understanding each wax metaphysical, they construct fundamentally different worlds. Given what each corresponding species of philosopher takes to be most basic to understanding a world, it seems that there is no reconciling the two. Kant, however, sees no genuine disagreement between these two types of thinker. Rather, he sees them both doing something right. For,

in *one* reasoning person the interest of *manifoldness* (according to the principle of specification), but in *another* the interest of *unity* (according to the principle of

aggregation) may be stronger. Each of them believes that he has acquired his judgment from insight into the object, and yet is basing it solely on his greater or lesser attachment to one of two principles. Neither of these principles rests on objective bases, but they rest only on the interest of reason; hence they might better be called maxims rather than principles (CPR B 694/A 666 - A 667/B 695)

He continues:

as long as these maxims are regarded as objective insights, their difference occasions not only dispute but also obstacles. These obstacles greatly delay the truth, until a means is found to reconcile the disputing interest and to satisfy reason in this regard. (CPR A 667/B 695 - A 668/B 696)

Kant thinks that he has discovered a way of adjusting the claims of these opposite types of understanding, in a way that will accommodate both to an adequate science of nature.² With this move he intends to prescind from that kind of history in which 'visionary treasures are promised and real treasures are squandered' (CPrR 163).

Kant essentially agrees with Hume that the transcendental ideas of reason can have no determining foundation in a science of nature; thus, we employ them illegitimately if we use them to construct concepts concerning nature as a whole (cf. CPR *Antinomies*, A 426 B 454 ff.). Reason, nevertheless, according to Kant, has an 'empirical employment' (CPR A 643/B 671).

Kant argues we may legitimately use reason's demand for comprehension in a single intuition not in a constructive but rather in a merely regulative way; for prescribing both a direction to the understanding and an ordering of its empirical concepts. Thus, reason, rather than constructing our understanding of the world provides a rule 'through which alone the manifold of knowledge can become a system' (CPrR 151). It is thus in its regulative employment, rather than a constructive employment, that reason is able to draw the understanding above the brute multiplicity of appearances.

However, Kant concludes that:

reason's law whereby we are to seek this unity is necessary, because without this law we would have no reason at all, but without reason would have no coherent use of the understanding, and in the absence of such use would have no sufficient mark of empirical truth. (CPR A 651/B 679)

With this conclusion, Kant appears to backtrack, at least on the spirit, if not the letter, of his preceding critique. In so doing, Kant travels dangerously close to begging the question against Cartwright's position. For, in his stipulation that truth fundamentally concerns coherence he seems to locate the very concept of empirical truth in the sublime understanding. Here Kant's own conclusions seem to fall under his general diagnosis of reason's natural tendency to over extend itself.

Cartwright might respond to Kant's sublime stipulation: *for all Kant knows, the world is a jumble. If it is a jumble then that fact alone should not preclude our acquiring knowledge of nature. It will just be the case that our empirical knowledge will concern only particulars.* Surely, in such a case Cartwright will still have a sufficient criterion for empirical truth.

7.4 THIRD CRITIQUE AND BEAUTIFUL JUSTIFICATION FOR A SUBLIME SYNTHESIS

In his third *Critique*, Kant more directly addresses the above type of worry. In this final *Critique*, he seeks to establish an empirical warrant for the empirical employment of reason. In the first *Critique* Kant had advocated a different approach; the kind Leibniz suggests in his *Discourse on Metaphysics* §22. Leibniz's metaphysical conclusions (secured by the work of his sublime understanding) provide the warrant for the regulative use of the principle of reason in his epistemology. Leibniz's epistemology quite naturally flows from his metaphysics.

Wielding his sublime principle of reason, Leibniz paints in broad strokes the metaphysical structure of nature. However, that principle cannot get him to the determinate details of any particular region of nature. For, unlike God, Leibniz cannot carry out the necessary deduction from the totality down to the particular. Thus, Leibniz's tendency to prioritise the whole to the part essentially prevents him from determining the character of any

particular region of nature. Thus, the sublimity of his understanding thwarts his epistemology taking on the same form as his metaphysics. Accordingly, finite minds must be content with understanding nature mechanically rather than teleologically. Nevertheless, because of his prior metaphysical conclusion about the overall form of nature he gives himself the warrant to help mechanical investigation along with a heuristic (or regulative) use rather than a determining use of that sublime principle of reason. Thus, he is able to direct his mechanical understanding to the investigation of the shortest path or the simplest mechanical law.

Kant faces a problem in the first *Critique*, because he eliminates Leibniz's metaphysical warrant for the regulative use of that principle of reason. Kant nonetheless wants to give himself the discount of wielding that principle. However, without that metaphysical warrant he threatens to commit the very metaphysical sin of which he tries to rid philosophy.

In his *Critique of Judgment* Kant reiterates the claim he had made in the first *Critique* that there can be no a priori basis for the use of such a principle of reason; if there is a warrant for its use, it must be found within the concept of nature (CJ 360). Kant also reasserts another conclusion of the first *Critique*: he suggests that 'unless we presuppose [the principle of the mere mechanism of nature] in our investigation [of nature] we can have no cognition of nature at all' (CJ 387). Kant goes on to look for an empirical rather than a metaphysical justification for science's (or the theoretical understanding's) regulative use of reason. He does this by pursuing another one of Leibniz's insights concerning the difference between organisms and mechanisms.³

Pursuing this distinction, Kant identifies certain phenomena of nature that frustrate a mechanical understanding. For, certain objects in nature display an intrinsic purposiveness; this type of object we cannot mechanically understand (CJ 388). Kant is adamant that not even a blade of grass can be mechanically understood. Rather, we appreciate organic objects with the synthetic employment reason. Kant concludes that the success of this employment of reason gives us an a posteriori warrant for its continued employment. Kant states:

[a]n organized product of nature is one in which everything is purposive and reciprocally also a means. In such a product nothing is gratuitous, purposeless, or to be attributed to a blind natural mechanism. (CJ 376)

Kant continues:

the example that nature offers us in its organic products justifies us, indeed calls upon us, to expect nothing from it and its laws except what is purposive in [relation to] the whole. (CJ 379)

However, this leaves Kant with a problem: namely, how to reconcile 'two wholly different kinds of causality' (CJ 422). Kant concludes that

[t]he possibility of this reconciliation lies in the supersensible substrata of nature, about which we cannot determine anything affirmatively, except that it is the being itself of which we know merely the appearance. (CJ 422)

Even though Kant seeks to reconcile the sublime and beautiful understandings, his whole project threatens to beg the question against the beautiful understanding. For this drive to synthesis is a drive of the sublime rather than the beautiful understanding. Just as we cannot imagine Cartwright assenting to Kant's final appeal (above) to the supersensible, for the same reason we cannot imagine her taking that first step with Kant. This quarrel is an aesthetic disagreement concerning the nature of meaning. As a sublime thinker, Kant wants to subsume the beautiful understanding under his own species of understanding. Thus, when he talks of science Kant's language (in relation to the approach advocated by the beautiful understanding) is ultimately exclusive rather than inclusive.

7.5 ART AND SCIENCE

Kant differentiates between scientists and artistic geniuses; and, to some extent, this distinction relies on his characterisation of science as a sublime rather than a beautiful enterprise.

Kant suggests that 'the foremost property of genius must be *originality*.' He goes on to explain that:

since nonsense too can be original the products of genius must also be models, i.e., they must be exemplary; hence they do not arise themselves through imitation, still they must serve others for this (CJ 307-308)

In contrast to the work of geniuses, for Kant, even the greatest scientist is imitative, for it is not the scientist who gives the rule; it is nature. Thus, Newton is not originaive, while artistic geniuses are. Newton, as great as he is, is essentially imitative in his understanding of nature. According to this characterization, Kant concludes that what the greatest scientists say about nature will be quite transparent to their students (CJ 309). Here, Kant presupposes an agreement of taste: namely, that nodding in unison of sublime understandings, rather than the locking of horns between the sublime and beautiful understandings. What also follows from this construal of the scientist as essentially imitative is Kant's assessment that the progress or discoveries of science are inevitable. Kant says of Newton:

[h]ad the man lived only twice as long he would have been able to build even further on his experiences and with time discover as the entire human race will not discover in a thousand years. (*Metaphysik Mrongovius* (1782-1783) 29:916)

Thus, while Kant raises the achievement of Newton above all other scientists, he stops short of raising him above the combined achievement of over a thousand years of scientists. Because Kant's elevation of Newton is limited, there can only be a difference in degree, rather than a difference in kind, between the greatest scientist's immortal works and the achievements of much lesser minds (CJ 309); accordingly, there is something transparent about Newton's work.

Under this conception of the inevitable progress of science, Kant essentially discounts the possibility of the beautiful and the sublime understandings offering conflicting determinations of nature. Without entertaining the possibility of that kind of aesthetic conflict, Kant is able to assert that even the very best of scientists is merely imitative rather than exemplary.⁴ Nature is exemplary in the way that works of artistic genius are exemplary. Scientists merely imitate the form of nature. Thus, according to this conception, scientists cease to be scientists insofar as they produce something exemplary rather than merely imitative.

In contrast to the inevitable achievement of science, the exemplary works of genius hold a different status: if Homer had never existed for example, then there is nothing inevitable about the appearance of his works. There is nothing inevitable about the appearance of particular works of genius (just as there is nothing inevitable about the appearance of geniuses). For, there is no rule that can be followed in producing works of genius. The genius, according to Kant, cannot

show how his ideas, rich in fancy and yet also in thought, arise and met in his mind; the reason is that he himself does not know, and hence also cannot teach it to anyone else. (CJ 309)

This divide between scientists and artists draws Kant to deny that philosophers qua philosophers can be artists. Philosophers like scientists are (or ought to be) essentially imitative. That is to say, philosophers like scientists ought to tell us something about reality. Thus, according to Kant, there is something mutually excluding or opposite about the natures of possible works of philosophy and works of art (cf. CJ 308).⁵

Regarding Plato, therefore, Kant must make a tough excluding judgement; for from his perspective Plato (in relation to any single work) cannot be both a philosopher and artist. It turns out that Kant is proscriptive in his judgement: he assesses Plato to be a philosopher, but a philosopher we ought not follow. For, according to Kant, Plato failed to make metaphysics a science; rather, he

left the world of sense because it set such narrow limits to our understanding; on the wings of ideas, he ventured beyond that world and into the empty space of pure understanding. He did not notice that with all his efforts he made no headway. He failed to make headway because he had no resting point against which—as a foothold as it were—he might brace himself and apply his forces in order to set the understanding in motion (CPR B 9).

Because of Plato's apparent flight of fancy, Kant judges him a fanatic and the father of all fanaticism (see CJ p. 241 fn. 16). *Pace* Kant's evaluation, however, it seems that the very point of departure for Plato into what Kant regards as mysticism and fanaticism might count instead as his entry into Kant's opposing category of genius. Kant rates Homer a fine artist (i.e., a genius) and Plato a fanatical philosopher. He sees something fanciful in the works of Homer (CJ 309) thus he considers Homer an artist. However, on detecting something fanciful in the works of Plato, Kant judges him fanatical. Why does Kant not cast Homer as the bad scientist and Plato as the great artist?

In at least one sense Kant clearly regards philosophers and scientists above artists (cf. CJ 309). His willingness to count Plato a philosopher rather than an artist displays his willingness to do justice to Plato and to bring him under the scope of his own critique. From Kant's perspective there is something for philosophy to learn in counting Plato a philosopher. In contrast regarding Homer as scientist rather than an artist could benefit no one. To be judged by Kant as a fanatical philosopher rather than a fanciful artist is a commendation cloaked in condemnation.

Pragmatic considerations aside, Kant's criteria does not seem sufficient for us to genuinely arbitrate into which group Plato need to be put. Running Kant's thought experiment does not help: the fact that we cannot imagine Plato's dialogues ever appearing without Plato may not, of itself, argue for him being a genius rather than a philosopher. For, the lack of inevitability that we attach to works of artistic genius may attach equally to works of bad science or fanatical philosophy. For, only the greatness (or in Kant's terms, the imitative accuracy) of the greatest achievements in science makes their appearance inevitable.

Kant offers a related and equally unhelpful test: he claims that there cannot be a 'science of the beautiful'; thus, Kant suggests that if, while treating fine art as a science, 'we asked for reasons and proofs we would be put off with tasteful phrases (*bons mots*)' (CJ 305). Here Kant essentially invites us to imagine Plato's reaction to a further demand for 'reasons and proofs'. The way in which we answer this question for Plato essentially decides how we regard Plato's work. However, regardless of how we answer this question, we do not decide whether Plato's authorship is philosophical rather than artistic or vice versa. For, if we assume that Plato would answer with tasteful phrases, and, in turn, if we conclude that he must therefore be an artist rather than a philosopher, then we essentially beg the question against a possible artistic form of philosophical expression. If on the other hand, we assume that Plato will answer with proofs rather than tasteful phrases, then, in another way, we beg the question against the nature of his authorship. Rather than this thought experiment deciding the status of Plato as either a philosopher or artist, with it we merely decide whether Plato is a direct or indirect communicator (see Kraut chapter).

Kant lands himself in this bind in relation to Plato because he seems to deny Plato's claim that reason cannot be imitated; according to Plato reason can only originate (see *Republic* chapter). Because Kant takes philosophers to be direct communicators, he does not entertain the prospect that they can produce something that other people cannot imitate (that is, directly understand). More particularly, because Kant takes Plato to be a direct communicator⁶ he straightforwardly assumes that much of Plato's talk is illegitimately about the metaphysical content of reason's ideas rather than their mere form.

At the same time, because Kant separates off the work of the artistic geniuses from the domain of philosophical enquiry (which includes the self-created ideals of reason that have an essentially practical rather than theoretical application) he mistakenly assumes that artists produce work that can only be understood in an imitative way (i.e., in the way scientists understand nature). Regardless of whether it concerns the sciences or fine art, Kant therefore wrongly supposes that all education must take the form of imitation.

However, if Kant had recognised Plato's works as a way of resolving the ancient quarrel between philosophy and art he would have seen an expression of philosophy as art (or a form of education) that demands an originating rather than an imitative understanding. In turn, Kant would have seen a far closer connection between himself as practical philosopher and Plato's work. Consider, for example, the connection between Kant's discussion of the pure,

rather than empirical, ideals of reason — i.e. those ideas that reason constructs for itself as standards — and what Plato with the dialogues is inviting our understanding to work out. More particularly, consider Kant's discussion of the self-legislation of reason and the inevitability of our reason conceiving of these commands as from God (see *Opus* 22:105, 22:116, 22:120, 21:27, 21:30, 22:53, 22:54, esp. 22:123; see *Apology* chapter). Here, in this limited practical use of reason, Kant is in agreement with Plato that reason is essentially originitive and thus godlike.⁷

NOTES

- ¹ Cartwright, a philosopher of science, who, methodologically, falls with Ryle onto the fox side of Berlin's species divide, accepts Duhem's distinction between:

the deep but narrow minds of the French, and the broad but shallow minds of the English. The French mind sees things in an elegant, unified way. It takes Newton's three laws of motion and turns them into beautiful, abstract mathematics of Lagrangian mechanics. The English mind ... is an exact contrast. ... It holds a thousand things all at once, without imposing much abstract order or organization. (*Laws of Physics*, p. 19)

In distinguishing between the beautiful and sublime understandings Kant essentially makes the same distinction. Like Duhem and Cartwright, Kant also associates these opposite types of understandings with different nationalities. However, in contrast to Duhem and Cartwright, he suggests that the English possess sublime understandings and the French possess beautiful understandings (*Observations* p.97).

This apparent disagreement between Kant and Cartwright over which characteristic to attribute to which nationality, practically demonstrates something about their genuine core agreement. Their disagreement merely shows that the world looks importantly different from the perspective of each type of understanding. From the perspectives of both foxes and hedgehogs, the world is populated, more or less, with foxes and hedgehogs; however, for a fox foxes and hedgehogs look significantly different than they do for a hedgehog. That is to say, a person who possesses a sublime understanding, like Kant, will possess quite different conceptions of the sublime and the beautiful than will a person who has a beautiful understanding (see CJ 346).

- ² There is perhaps an important difference in how Kant considers the work of the sublime understanding in the first and third *Critiques*. For, in the first *Critique* he describes the sublime understanding pursuing unity 'according to the principle of aggregation'. Here, it may appear that the sublime understanding uses the same elements as does the beautiful understanding, but merely heads with them in the opposite direction. A more robust conception of the sublime understanding would give its work more autonomy. In the third *Critique*, Kant seems to speak to a more robust conception. For in that work he denies that it is possible to understand organic bodies (e.g., a blade of grass) as aggregates (that is to say, mechanically). Thus, he denies that the sublime understanding pursues unity 'according to the principle of aggregation'. With this autonomy comes ineffability.
- ³ Leibniz supposes that organicity goes right down: animals are made up out of animals down to infinity. Even though nature can be understood mechanically there is nevertheless something irreducibly organic about it — that is to say, there is something about nature, we cannot get to by mechanical means.
- ⁴ It may appear that Kuhn and Kant disagree on this point. For, Kuhn asserts that there is something exemplary about the work of the greatest scientists. While Kant, on the other hand, argues that science is merely imitative. However, this disagreement may merely be apparent. Kant speaks as a practitioner under the influence of Newton. While, Kuhn standing outside of that particular practice, is able to see exemplification where Kant is able to emphasise mere imitation. Kuhn is able to do this because he chooses to emphasise how

aesthetic laden the work of scientists is. While Kant does not deny this, he takes it as a given or he takes it as unavoidable and thus see no need to discuss its determining influence.

Alternatively, the apparent difference between what Kant and Kuhn claim may simply come down to the former emphasising the direct communication of the greatest scientists, while the latter emphasises the influence of the showing rather than the possible telling.

- ⁵ Here there is a rich connection between the form of love and the form of art. There is something unique about the form of both love and the work of genius, moreover, they each display inner necessity. Thus, an artist (e.g., Don Quixote) can profitably have a muse in the same way as an artist can be instructed (in the nature of completed form) by considering classical works of art.

Interestingly, for Nietzsche and Kierkegaard love is beyond good and evil. That is to say, we cannot make sense of love through the ethical (i.e. Kant's categorical imperative). For Kierkegaard, even though there is something divine about love, there is also something essentially exception making about it. So too for the artist. Thus, because the artist is outside the ethical, because he has to break the received rules in his work, he makes an exception of it and thus must proceed with fear and trembling. After the same manner, the lover in relation to the beloved is beyond good and evil and must proceed with fear and trembling.

- ⁶ In not only claiming that Plato is a fanatic but also that he is the father of all fanaticism Kant not only shows that he reads Plato as a direct communicator but he shows that he takes his cue from the history of philosophy.

- ⁷ In Kant's ethics if we conceive of him as endorsing merely an imitative view of reason, then the categorical imperative turns out to be a merely regulative rule for the understanding rather than the constitutive form of the understanding. From such a rule-following reading of Kant's thinking on ethics many incoherencies follow which do not follow if his work is read as merely descriptive (of the constitutive form of a good will) and thus not as prescriptive (or merely regulative) of the understanding.

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